

Updated March 2020

Parent Handbook



A Montessori-Based Private School
for Infants through Third Grade

A PEANUT-FREE SCHOOL

23443 Cottonwood Parkway
California MD 20619

(301) 863-7740
administrator@starmakerschool.org
www.starmakerschool.org

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Welcome to Starmaker!

A Montessori-Based Private School

Welcome to Starmaker School for Early Education at Wildewood! We are very happy to have you as a new member of our family and a part of the grander Montessori community! Our mission is to provide a quality program that contributes to strengthening a child's academic and social standing while providing opportunities for parents to develop quality family time. We believe that a child should be taught individually and provided the freedom to explore the world in their own way.

The Montessori methods and philosophy have been recognized for over one hundred years. Dr. Maria Montessori became the first female physician to graduate from the University of Rome and then went on to pursue careers in psychology and anthropology. Eventually her expertise as a copious examiner by scientific observation led her to become the prominent childhood developmental theorist of her time. Her acclaimed work attracted national recognition that led to the study and devotion of the Montessori Method in the United States mid-century. Those who have learned from her school of thought are attracted to her intellectual and methodical reasoning, as well as an innate understanding of the whole child. Dr. Montessori was the first educator to develop a child-sized classroom and a curriculum that follows the developmental needs and tendencies of children in various stages of development.

Our teachers vary in experience with the Montessori Method; therefore our staff members are required to attend our Montessori events throughout the year. They are also offered Montessori training for assistants as well as the presentations of the core philosophy and techniques. Some of our teachers have undergone a rigorous three-year Montessori Certification schooling program to become certified Montessori Directresses through the American Montessori Society.

Our programs excel because they foster a love of learning at the heart of every classroom. Experiences within the classroom are structured, exciting, fresh, and always suited to the needs of the child. The emphasis in our classrooms is not centered on the directresses who act more as facilitators and mentors to the learning processes. The emphasis is geared towards the environment and materials as well as constantly meeting the needs of the child. Montessori believed that in the embryonic state, an infant is physically and emotionally going through a multitude of changes. Therefore, she believed that in a child's first 6 years of development, the child is going through the same external changes as before, yet internally. The child's "absorbent mind" is constantly, yet unconsciously, fishing for stimuli in the environment to cultivate those needs. Our use of didactic Montessori developed materials and our attention to proper class size and the prepared environment constantly support the "whole child;" all emotional, physical, and spiritual manifestations.

The Montessori philosophy is based on the premise that:

- Children shall have the opportunity for independence through their environment.
- Children are to be respected as different from adults and as individuals who are different from each other.
- Children create themselves through purposeful activity (hence the Montessori Prepared environment).
- Children possess unusual sensitivity and mental intuitions for absorbing and learning from their environment.

We encourage each of our families to attend the Montessori parent education activities, become subscribers to The Montessori Magazine, ask questions, or write articles for our school newsletter based on your Montessori experiences within our school! We hope you will find this educational approach as much as a way of life as we do!

Stephanie Grable, Director of Education

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Starmaker School for Early Education at Wildewood, LLC has been established to provide the community with an opportunity to obtain a quality education for its children in a safe, family-oriented setting. The principle on which our programs are based is the concept that children develop at their own pace and are motivated from within by a natural curiosity and a love of learning. The goals of our programs are to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn and to develop his/her sense of confidence and independence through a purposefully designed classroom environment. Starmaker's curriculum is designed to recognize each child as an individual with the right to be respected as a developing human being. We offer developmentally appropriate programs designed for children from six weeks through the elementary grades.

We use the Montessori philosophy, curriculum, and methods throughout our programs. Our use of didactic Montessori developed materials and our attention to proper class size and the prepared environment constantly support the emphasis on the "whole child" approach.

Starmaker is approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for our Primary, Kindergarten and Elementary programs and is licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care (MSDE OCC) as a childcare facility for our infant, toddler, preprimary, and homework center programs.

1. Introduction

Starmaker School for Early Education at Wildewood (herein after referred to as Starmaker) has been established to provide the community with an opportunity to obtain a quality education for its children in a safe, family-oriented setting. It is a school based on the principle that all children develop at their own pace and should be taught individually. Starmaker is approved by the State of Maryland Board of Education for our Primary and Elementary classes and is licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education, Child Care Administration as a childcare facility for children 6 weeks to 13 years.

Starmaker is located at 23443 Cottonwood Parkway in the Wildewood Technology Park, California, Maryland. The facility was especially designed to meet the needs of children ranging in age from 6 weeks to 13 years of age in an open, self-directed environment. We have large, fenced play yards with equipment and activities to meet the needs of the most active youngsters. Our outdoor space also includes a garden area to help teach children the joys of nature.

Starmaker School for Early Education at Wildewood has developmental programs designed for children from six weeks through the elementary grades. The underlying principle upon which the programs are based is the concept that children are motivated from within by a natural curiosity and a love of learning. The goals of our programs are to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn and to develop his/her sense of confidence and independence. Starmaker is designed to recognize each child as an individual with the right to be respected as a developing human being.

Senior Leadership Team

Florence Freeman, MBA Executive Director/CEO ffreeman@starmakerschool.org

Rycourt Freeman, MBA, PMP Vice President/CTO rffreeman@starmakerschool.org

Davia Montanez, Assistant Director, dmontanez@starmakerschool.org

Stephanie Grable, Director of Education, stephanie@starmakerschool.org

Lynn Ennis, Director-at-Large, lennis@starmakerschool.org

General email: administrator@starmakerschool.org

Website: www.starmakerschool.org Tel: 301-863-7740 Fax: 301-863-6659

2. Administrative Policies

We have listed our policies as they pertain to you and your child. If you have any questions concerning our policies, please stop in, or call the office to speak with the Director and/or CEO. We are always willing to answer your questions and explain Starmaker's policies and procedures. **Please complete the handbook receipt and acknowledgment form and return to the Director.** You are also welcome to visit the School to observe your child's class in action.

2.1 Admission

No person will be denied enrollment in any of Starmaker School for Early Education at Wildewood programs because of race, color, creed, national origin, or social inheritance.

The parent or guardian initiates admission by completing the Application for Enrollment, submitting a \$150 for one child or \$250 for multiple children non-refundable application fee, and meeting with the Director. The Director will explain the various programs we offer, as well as our philosophy and educational goals

through an orientation interview. The parents and child will then meet with the child's prospective teacher to discuss the child's background and needs. The child is evaluated on the basis of readiness for the chosen program. Upon agreement of the appropriate program, the teacher and the parents will select a start date and schedule an orientation with the teacher. **Upon enrollment, the first month's non-refundable tuition is due.**

The parents will be provided with the necessary forms to enroll the child at Starmaker. By law, submission of an Application, an Emergency Card, a Health Inventory, Lead Screening and an Immunization forms are required **BEFORE** the child can be admitted to Starmaker. We ask that you complete a Student Questionnaire, and a Tuition Agreement (agreement must be returned before the first day of school).

School registration for the upcoming school year is conducted each spring and throughout the summer. Early applicants will receive priority in class placement. Spaces in each of our programs are filled first from our current students, then from our waiting list, and then from new applicants. Due to the nature of our Programs, children may be accepted into the program year round, as space is available.

TOILET TRAINING IS REQUIRED for your child to be enrolled in our Primary programs

2.2 Tuition & Fees

In order for the school to meet its financial obligation, you are requested to make prompt payment of tuition and other assessed fees (activity fees, contract renewal fees, supply fees, field trip fees). Payment for your child's tuition is to be mailed directly to the school or placed into our payment box at the front desk. The school accepts tuition payments by checks, money orders, or cash. Tuition is paid on a monthly basis. **Upon enrollment, the first month's non-refundable tuition, enrollment fee, and activity fees are due.**

2.2.1 Payment Schedule

All tuition is payable in advance. All activity fees are due prior to participation in the activity. Parents are requested to mark their calendars as a reminder of the payment due date (s), as no reminder notices are sent. In the event that circumstances may delay your payments, it is incumbent upon the parent to make the Director and/or CEO aware of the delay. This notification does not prevent the assessment of late charges, but does allow the CEO time to make any financial adjustments that may be necessary.

Payment Policy:

PAYMENTS are due on or before the 1st of each month. A late charge of \$40 will be added to your account on the 6th of each month for Infant – primary programs and on the 20th for school age programs. If tuition is not received, your student will be disenrolled by the 16th or the 30th of each month respectively. Please avoid the extra cost required to collect tuition by paying on time.

There are special circumstances when parents cannot meet their obligations on time. When these circumstances arise, it is the parent's responsibility to inform the CEO and/or Director so that a payment plan can be arranged. If a payment plan is opted for, then it must be approved by the CEO. Any violation of the payment plan will lead to immediate disenrollment and the account will be turned over to our collections agency. Our returned check fee is \$35.00 per submission of the check. After two returned checks, parents will be required to pay by money order or cash.

2.2.2 Discounts

A 10% reduction for the lowest cost program will be granted when more than one child is enrolled on a full-time basis from the same family. A sibling discount is not applicable for part-timers. A 5% discount is available to parents who pay their annual tuition up front for full time students only. A 5% discount is

available to BAE employees. The enrollment fee and annual registration fees are waived for children whose parents are in the Military. **No discount is available for part-timers who pay annually.** We also offer a referral program discount and a loyalty program discount. Please discuss with the director for up-to-date information on these discounts.

2.2.3 Scheduled and Unscheduled Closings

There is no credit on tuition for scheduled or unscheduled closings. All school holidays, closings, and vacation periods have been built into the tuition fees.

2.2.4 Tuition increases

Starmaker reserves the right to raise the cost of tuition to meet their fiscal responsibilities. Tuition increases are posted in March or April and take effect in September of that calendar year. Tuition will increase each year.

2.3 Contracts

2.3.1 School/Childcare Contracts

School contracts are due in the spring of each year for the fall. The school year runs from September through the last day of school in June for all 10-Month contracts and August for all 12-month contracts. **Please note that 10 equal monthly tuition payments are due for ALL 10-month contracts which end the last day of school in June. Tuition for these 10-month contracts has been calculated through the last day of school. (Summer camp contracts are separate from school year contracts).** Annual 12 month contracts begin when a student is enrolled and ends in August following the enrollment. A \$50.00 renewal fee is required, per family with all contracts. Parents have a choice of paying for the entire school year or making monthly payments. Payments are expected over all the holiday breaks, as they are already factored into the fee schedule. Other payment arrangements are reviewed and approved on a case by case basis by the CEO.

To accommodate parents, Starmaker now offers two types of contracts – 12 month and 10 month contracts with two different tuition schedules for all programs except Kindergarten, Elementary, and Homework Center programs. Please discuss these options with the administrators during enrollment or contract renewal period.

2.4 Withdrawals

Starmaker realizes that unexpected circumstances and situations can arise which may necessitate the withdrawal of a student from Starmaker. Parents must realize that hiring decisions including budgets are prepared based on enrollments and signed contracts. The CEO will review, evaluate and make a decision on the request for withdrawal, on a case by case basis so as not to jeopardize the financial stability of the school. Parents will be expected to pay their full monthly fee should they decide to withdraw in the middle of the month. Parents wishing to break their contract are required to give **two months' notice in writing** and pay a penalty of one month's tuition. **Parents giving less than two months' notice will be required to pay two months tuition as penalty.** Parents who have paid tuition annually and wish to withdraw during the last two months of the year will forfeit their two months tuition including any discounts that may have been applied. Parents who have paid their annual tuition and wish to withdraw the first quarter of the year will forfeit an additional three months tuition and any discounts that may apply.

Please understand that we must take these precautions as we make hiring decisions based on enrollment. Also, this enables us to keep our tuition reasonably low and to maintain and remunerate qualified teachers. Following the guidelines set forth below, the CEO will decide whether the parents should be released from the Tuition Agreement for just cause and what portion, if any, of the tuition fees should be refunded:

1. **Health or Disruptive Conduct** - If, at any time, the CEO finds the health or pattern of conduct of a student such that the continued presence of the student in Starmaker might have an adverse effect upon other students, the CEO may discharge the student, terminate the Tuition Agreement, and refund unused tuition less one-month tuition penalty. For annual payments and all other discounted plans, the discounts will be forfeited.
2. **Geographic Relocation of the Child's Family due to Military Order** - In such circumstances, the CEO will release the parents from their Tuition Agreement, provided a written request and proof of order is received at least 30 days prior to the requested withdrawal date. Any request received less than 30 calendar days prior to the withdrawal date will necessitate holding the parents liable for two months tuition. For annual payments and all other discounted plans, the discounts will be forfeited.

No approval for any unused tuition refund will be granted unless all other financial obligations to Starmaker have been satisfied. There will be NO refund of registration or enrollment fees. Refunds to parents are processed 30 days after disenrollment.

Starmaker is in the process of investigating tuition insurance programs which will benefit and support the school and parents should they decide to withdraw their child. Information will be shared with parents as soon as this is finalized.

2.5 Disenrollment Policy

Every child in our care deserves to be in a safe learning environment. Thus, continuous inappropriate and disruptive behavior that puts other children and teachers at risk, or minimizes the ability of the teachers to provide an appropriate level of instruction to the class will not be tolerated and will lead to disenrollment. After three incident reports are filed, one consultation with parents and teacher, and one parent teacher conference with director and/or CEO, a behavioral report form will be used to document behavior for two additional weeks. During and after the two week period, the teacher will have a parent conference to discuss behavioral concerns. If no improvement occurs, the student will be terminated.

Starmaker reserves the right to disenroll a student from the school without the benefit of the above process if the parent or child is abusive or disruptive to any of the children or staff. We have a no tolerance policy on this issue.

2.6 Visitors

Non-custodial parents and other visitors must call for an appointment or contact the Director to schedule their visits. All visitors are required to check in at the office when they enter Starmaker. We know you will respect this request as it is designed to ensure the safety of all the children at Starmaker.

2.7 Release of Children to Persons Other Than the Parent or Guardian

Note: No child will be released to a person other than his/her custodial parent or guardian unless Starmaker has the parent's written and signed permission.

We regret any inconvenience this may cause but it is necessary to ensure the safety of your child. If someone else on a regular basis will pick up your child, it must be indicated on the Emergency Card, which is kept in the front office. If an individual will be picking up your child who is not indicated on your Emergency Card, you must fill out a Student Authorization Pick-Up Form in the front office, which will be signed and dated. An Identification card **MUST** be presented if someone other than authorized parent or guardian is picking up your child. We reserve the right to contact the parents concerning any unscheduled changes.

Parents are required to update and return their Emergency Cards to the school. If parents have moved or changed telephone numbers, it is the parent's responsibility to update their Emergency Card. The

child cannot attend school without it – this is critical and required by our Licensing Regulation.

In the event that a separated or divorced parent does not want the non-custodial parent to pick up the child, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide the School with a copy of the restraining order or legal document(s).

Children that are the subject of an executed, court approved custody, separation or other form of legally enforceable agreement determining the custodial status of such children, **MUST** provide copies of all agreements, amendments and updates to Starmaker. The School Director and Class Teacher **MUST** be notified of any custody situation that exists for a child at the School.

Please understand that our teachers and staff are not to engage in any disputes or custody arrangements between or among families. They are merely to follow the instructions provided by the court.

2.8 Arrival, Tardiness, Dismissal, and Absences

Arrival

Upon arrival at the School, it is critical that **you sign your child into the School using our computerized sign in at the front desk and the teacher will sign in your child in the classroom.** This will allow us to account for all children in case of an emergency. The school will not be held liable for any child not checked into the system or the class roster. If the system is down, please notify a staff member so that your attendance can be updated when the system is functional.

Children under the age of three must be escorted to their classroom. Parents/Guardians should take the child to their room (prior to the beginning of class) and help him/her get settled. The teachers will begin to greet the children 15 minutes before class session begins. All other children must be dropped off at the top of the hallway and parents can watch them walk to their classroom. If you need assistance with dropping your child off, please see a staff member. We are here to help make this process as easy as possible for everyone.

Parents are asked to make a quick goodbye in order to support a smooth separation for their child. Please respect the noise level in the hallways and observe the **NO LOITERING** and **NO CELL PHONE USE** in the building policy.

For Pre-Primary programs and older, please be sure that your child is in class by 8:30 am. Class starts promptly at 8:30 am and it is important that your child not miss any class time. Students arriving after 8:30 am are considered late. Parents are required to ask the assistant to take the child into the classroom so as not to disrupt the teacher. Please do not try to speak to the teacher about your child during drop off. You may schedule a meeting with your child's teacher at a time convenient to her.

Tardiness

Tardiness is very disruptive to the class and the teacher. Consistent tardiness is a hindrance to your child's academic success. Please try to respect your child's class schedules and make sure your child is on time. We begin each program promptly. **After 8:15 am, please allow primary and elementary students to walk down the hallway to their classroom by themselves, so as not to disrupt the classroom.**

Dismissal

Dismissal begins five minutes before the close of your child's school day. Teachers will dismiss the children to their parents or the person designated as the pick-up person when the children are ready. When you arrive to pick up your child, please respect the calmness of the room and walk up to your child to get them. Do allow a few moments for them to pack up their lessons.

To help the teachers ensure the safety of each child, please do not take your child without the teacher's knowledge. At times it gets very hectic, so we would appreciate it if you would take the extra time to advise the staff that your child is leaving – especially when we are on the playground.

When you arrive to pick up your child, you must **sign your child out at the front lobby**. This ensures that we have a record of each child in case of an emergency. We must know when children leave and with whom they leave. Once you have signed your child out, it is assumed that you have accepted responsibility for your child's safety. Please do not allow your child to wander in the building or run out of the front door! If another person is authorized to pick up your child, please inform them of our sign-out procedures.

Naps

Children are encouraged to use the nap room to sleep or rest. In the Pre-Primary classroom, it is our policy that all children take a nap due to developmental needs. In the primary environment, all three year olds will nap or rest in the nap room.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent, we ask that you please inform the office as soon as possible.

2.9 Late Pick-Up/Early Drop-Off

Each child is enrolled for a specific time frame and we ask that you do not exceed these times because the scheduling of our staff is determined based on this information. Occasionally, circumstances occur that make it impossible for a parent to PICK UP on time or may require early DROP OFF. Please call Starmaker to make arrangements for these emergencies.

Note: There is an overtime charge for children not picked up by their contracted dismissal time. The late fee is \$5.00 for up to 15 minutes late and \$1.00 per minute thereafter. This is a per child fee. However, if your child is at Starmaker after closing time, the fee is \$1.00 per minute. Closing time is 5:30 p.m. for children 2 years and under, and 6:00 p.m. for all others.

The same fee applies to children **dropped off more than 10 minutes prior to their scheduled drop off time**. You will be asked to sign a statement for late or early drop off with the amount due.

If you need to pick up or drop off your child during class time, please make it as non-disruptive to the class as possible, or allow the office staff to get your child from their class.

2.9.1 Parking Lot Etiquette

Please drive SLOWLY into our parking lot to prevent accidents. Please turn your radio or music down as you enter the parking lot. Please do not ask staff to watch your children in your car while you are inside the school. Please do not leave your car running in the parking lot. All tobacco products must be extinguished before entering the parking lot. Starmaker is a totally smoke-free zone to protect our children. Please do not park by the mail box area for easy access to the elementary school bus during morning and afternoon drop off.

2.10 Before and After School Students and Absences

If your child is picked up and dropped off at Starmaker by bus, it is critical that you inform the school if your child is not going to be on the bus. If a child does not show up, our procedure is to call the school, then the parents, and then home to determine the whereabouts of your child.

2.11 Fire Drills & Emergencies

It is Starmaker's policy to have a minimum of one fire drill per month and two severe weather drills per year. These drills are under the supervision of the Director and/or Assistant Director. If you are present during a drill, please follow the directions of your child's teacher. Emergency escape routes are posted by all exits. Starmaker also has an emergency preparedness plan posted in the front lobby. A copy may be obtained from the office.

2.12 Emergency Closings/Delays

If there is a need to close Starmaker, we will announce the closing via Remind, our automated parent contact system, Twitter, and on our phone message.

If we need to close early, we will notify all parents who will be affected by the closing using our parent contact system, Remind. A telephone message will inform you of any emergencies, closings, or late starts. It is incumbent that parents give us updated home, cell, and work telephone numbers.

In the event of snow or inclement weather, we usually consider the status of St. Mary's County School System in determining delayed openings, early dismissals or school cancellations; however, Starmaker makes the final decision concerning delays or cancellations via Remind, twitter, or NBC 4.

We **DO NOT** give refunds for the days that are missed. Nor do we make up snow days except for the MSDE approved school programs if the number of days in session falls below the State-mandated 175 school days.

2.13 Drug-Free Environment

Starmaker is a drug-free, smoke free environment, during its operational hours. We prohibit the use of illegal substances, as well as, alcohol and tobacco, on the premises. Starmaker is totally **smoke-free** and **drug-free** to protect our children. Please **DO NOT** bring anything onto our grounds that falls into this category. Little children pick up and put into their mouths everything they find! Cigarette butts can make them SICK.

This Policy reflects State mandated regulations for "Drug-Free School Zones." As a school, we are covered under this legislation. You may be fined or arrested for violating this law. The "Drug-Free Zone" starts before you reach our driveway.

2.14 Problems/Suggestion Process

We encourage our parents to talk with the Director and/or the CEO whenever they have any suggestions or problems. We want your help in ensuring that our school maintains its high standards. We welcome all constructive suggestions to improve the quality of the school and the programs we offer.

2.15 Electronic Communication

Starmaker has a web site and email address for all of our teachers and senior staff. The website address is www.starmakerschool.org. Please feel free to send your suggestions to us about documents you would like us to include on the website. Feel free to communicate with teachers via email. Every email starts with the teacher's first initial and last name and ends with @starmakerschool.org. Our general email address is administrator@starmakerschool.org. We encourage all parents to join Remind App by downloading the App on your cell phone. Search for Starmake (without the r) and follow the prompts. If you have questions about joining, contact the administrators.

3. Food Service

Effective September 1, 2009, Starmaker became a peanut free school! Do not bring any food items containing peanut or peanut products to our campus.

3.1 Snacks

The children will be provided with nutritious snacks. We provide a mid-morning snack for our Toddler through Elementary classes and a mid-afternoon snack for all the children in the School. Copies of the snack and lunch menus are printed for each month and available at the reception area or kitchen bulletin board. If you wish to provide your child's class with a special snack, please talk with your child's teacher and/or the Director prior to bringing it in. They will be pleased to have you plan a special treat for the class. Note that your child's favorite snack or dish may be dangerous to some other child in his or her class due to allergies.

3.2 Breakfast

You may bring your child's breakfast with you and we will provide a place for them to eat (**before 7:30 a.m.**). We encourage you to arrange your day so that breakfast is a shared meal at home whenever possible. In order to be ready for classes we stop breakfast at 7:30 a.m. If you arrive after that time we request that your child wait until morning snack is available and then they may eat their breakfast. With the exception of the Infant/Toddler Rooms, **cups from home are not allowed to be brought in with the child.** Starmaker provides cups if needed.

3.3 Birthdays

Birthdays are a special day and we welcome you to share it with your child's class. If you would like to bring something to share on that day, please feel free to do so. However, PLEASE coordinate with your child's teacher so that we can make you aware of any special dietary restrictions or allergies that may exist in the class and you can be sure there is enough for each child. **Some consideration should be given to the sugar content of the snacks and the size of each portion (little appetites).** Bagels and cream cheese, finger gelatins, rice krispy treats, applesauce, cheese, carrot sticks, granola bars, fruits, or other treats with good nutritional value make nice snacks. **We discourage sugary cakes, candy, and gum!**

3.4 Lunch Program

Eating together is an opportunity for social development. Good early eating habits lay the foundation for lifelong healthful eating. Our lunch is a family-style meal in which the children and teachers can participate. Children may bring their own lunch or participate in our lunch program.

The monthly lunch menu is posted outside of the kitchen door. Please advise the staff if there is any food your child **CANNOT** eat. Do not assume your child **WILL NOT EAT** a certain food. We have found that in a setting such as ours, children tend to eat a more varied diet. The cost of the lunch program is \$75.00 per month and is due the first of each month. The fee includes milk with the meal. Starmaker reserves the right to increase lunch rates. This information will be shared with parents in March and become effective in September of the same year.

The cost of the lunch program is \$75.00 per month and is due the first of each month. The fee includes milk with the meal. Starmaker reserves the right to increase lunch rates. This information will be shared with parents in March and become effective in September of the same year.

The lunch that you pack for your child should provide a healthy and balanced midday meal. A healthy lunch is one that includes protein, vegetable, fruit, and grains. Please do not include candy, gum, soda, or sugary snacks. **Parents wishing to bring perishable lunch items must place ONLY the perishable labeled item**

in the student lunch refrigerator in the Multi-Purpose Room. Do not place the child's lunch box in the fridge. We ask you not to send any red or purple colored juices since the dye can stain the placemats, tables, and floors. Please do not send food that must be heated.

3.4.1 Drop-in Lunch Program

This program is designed only for those children who have forgotten their lunch. When signing your child in, please fill out the lunch request ticket and give it to the office or your child's teacher. Place the drop-in lunch fee of \$5 in an envelope or attach it to the lunch request form with the child's name and the date and place the money in the payment box next to the front office. This program is intended for emergency use only.

4. Programs

Please note that children are transitioned into a particular classroom based on a number of criteria such as existing mix of students currently in classroom, size of classroom, temperament of student, skills and abilities of students, maturity of students, gender, age, and teacher's experience and personality to name a few. Parents' requests may not be honored.

4.1 Infant/Toddler Program (6 weeks through 24 months)

Our Infant/Toddler Program is only for full-time children. The rooms are open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Senior Staff are trained in infant/toddler development and are approved by the Child Care Administration. Our staff to student ratio for this program is 1:3. This is a year-round program.

Through careful and loving observation, we make ourselves aware of the special abilities the children have within themselves and give them the freedom to grow and to become who they are meant to be. The focus of the infant program is to foster the development of basic trust and to assist the emerging personality by supporting the developing sense of self as a unique and separate individual. Parents must bring meals for all infants prepared and ready to feed.

Key concepts of the Infant / Toddler Program

- Basic trust develops in an environment that responds appropriately to the child's communication of needs to be loved, respected, and accepted.
- Individualization develops in an environment that responds appropriately to the child's needs to become independent.
- Infants learn through their senses. They learn by watching and moving freely in the environment.
- The child is respected as a total person. The quality of physical care provided including holding, and feeding, affects the developing personality.
- Freedom to move and explore is essential to the development of the child's potential.
- Learning, which leads to the development of independence, occurs when children participate in their daily routines of care of self and care of the environment.
- Based on the acute sensitivity to the emergence of language, the child needs clear, appropriate models of expressive and receptive language of the community.

Toddlers enjoy similar curricula areas as the preprimary students but on a more basic level. Toddlers are introduced to practical life, sensorial, language, math, and cultural studies.

Requirements for Admission: Infants / Toddlers

Children must be between the ages of 6 weeks and 24 months. There will be a parent orientation meeting with the student's teacher at which time any prior care records must be presented. Information regarding the student's medical records must also be submitted to the office. All items brought to the school including bottles, cups, clothing, bags, food, etc MUST BE LABELED.

4.2 Pre-Primary Program (24 to 42 months)

The teachers are trained in early childhood development and education. Our staff to student ratio for this program is 1:6. Full day programs are from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. within their environment. The afternoon includes time for lunch, nap, group activities and outside play. This is a year-round program.

Students within this age group need to work on bonding and separation. At this stage, the child's biggest need is to separate him/herself as a unique individual with opinions, likes, and dislikes. This child is constantly saying NO and discovering boundaries. Our job is to provide an environment where the child can become an individual while being loved and supported, and where he/she can disagree while following the rules and fitting in socially.

A separate Summer activity fee will be charged, payment is required each year by May 31st.

Key concepts of the Pre-Primary Program

- Help them transition from the unconscious state to the conscious state where they are able to make choices.
- Learning, which leads to the development of independence, occurs when children participate in their daily routines of care of self and care of the environment.
- Transition them from dependence to independence.
- Preprimary students enjoy the same curricula as the primary students but on a more basic level which includes practical life, sensorial, language, math, and cultural studies.

Requirements for Admission

The child must be 24 – 42 months old and walking to enter the program. There will be a parent orientation meeting with the student's teacher at which time any prior care records must be presented. Information regarding the student's medical records must also be submitted to the office.

4.3 Primary Classes (ages 3 through 5 years)

(Children must be 3 years old by September 1 of the school year for which they are enrolled.)

The Primary Classes meet from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Montessori instruction) and from 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm (preschool enrichment program). Staff to student ratio for this program is approximately 1:13. Our programs are State approved educational programs for preschool children. All lead teachers meet the State of Maryland teaching requirements and are Montessori trained. Extended care is available for all primary classes from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Our primary program is year-round including summer. Students who leave for the summer are not guaranteed their spots in September.

The primary program serves the needs of students aged 3 years to 5 years. At this stage, the child is eager to gather knowledge about his or herself and his/her environment. The child's mind is now like a sponge, ready and waiting to absorb many of the details around him/her.

A separate Summer activity fee will be charged, payment is required each year by May 31st.

Key concepts of the Primary Program

- Students in the primary program primary learn through their senses.
- Students are exposed to the following curricula – practical life, sensorial, math, language, geography, foreign language, and science. The classroom experience is further enriched by art and music.
- Further developing their independence, each student works through the lessons at his/her own pace.
- In the primary program, the teacher’s role is to encourage independence, sense of order, coordination, and concentration to further enhance the holistic growth of the child.

Requirements for Admission

The child must be three years old by September 1 to enter the program. TOILET TRAINING IS REQUIRED for your child to be enrolled in our Primary programs. There will be a parent orientation meeting with the student’s teacher at which time any prior care records must be presented. Information regarding the student’s medical records must also be submitted to the office.

4.4 Kindergarten and Elementary Classes

These classes meet from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Our Kindergarten and Elementary programs are State approved programs. Our average class size is 15 students per staff. We offer a Kindergarten class for children 60 months and a Lower Elementary Class for children 6 to 9 years. The teachers have degrees and/or have Montessori teaching certificates. Before and after care is available for all elementary students with full-time contract from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The school year runs from September to the last day of school in June. Summer is optional. Parents who intend to have their children attend our summer program must register for it separately since spots are not guaranteed. However, our Kindergarten, Elementary, and Homework center students receive first priority in our summer program.

The Montessori curriculum strongly emphasizes math and language, and then uses them to study other subjects including anthropology, astronomy, philosophy, political science, and sociology. Art, music, and foreign language are lessons that are integrated throughout the Montessori curriculum.

Requirements for Admission: Kindergarten (60 Months)

The child must be 5 years old by September 1 to be considered a Kindergartner in our program; however a child who is younger than 5 years old (by no more than 3 months) may be evaluated for Kindergarten level work and readiness. If a child misses the cut-off and dependent on whether the child is academically, socially, and emotionally ready for the Kindergarten work, they may take part in the Montessori Kindergarten curriculum with their parents and teacher’s agreement. There will be a parent orientation meeting for new incoming Kindergartners with the student’s teacher at which time any prior medical records must be presented. Information regarding the student’s medical records must also be submitted to the office.

Requirements for Elementary Admission

Students must be six years old by September 1. Previous Montessori school attendance is preferred but not required. The student must be able to handle the expectations of a Montessori Elementary program such as choosing work, working independently, and as part of a community, handling materials carefully, respecting other children’s space, respecting adults, following multi- step directions, accepting direction from a teacher, and attending group lessons.

To be successful, students must be able to learn to make choices, cooperate with peers, develop and maintain a sense of order, demonstrate self-discipline, function independently, and participate non-competitively in a classroom community. There will be a parent orientation meeting with the student’s teacher at which time any prior care records must be presented. Information regarding the student’s medical

records must also be submitted to the office. Proof of Kindergarten graduation is required.

4.5 Homework Center/Before School & After School Program (for children up to 13 years of age)

Our Before and After School Care Program is available from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We offer this program to students from local schools in our busing area. We also provide for care when the schools have early dismissal and teacher workshops. Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care approves the staff. Group size is approximately 30 students with a staff ratio of 1:15.

Parents must inform the office during registration if their child should participate in the Homework Center program.

The goals of our Homework Center are as follows:

- Relieve parents of the stress of dealing with sometimes complex and involving projects from school by having the students conduct research onsite in the high-tech library.
- Provide parents additional free time for quality family time.
- Students will have an opportunity to go to bed on time – adequate sleep hours needed for healthy growth and well-being of children.
- The homework center experience will ensure that students are attentive, relaxed, and abreast of their classmates.

Program Features

- The homework center offers Technology Center with computers with internet access for research.
- Quality supervision of students in our care to ensure that they complete their homework before they are picked up.
- Focus primarily on Math and English homework
- In the absence of homework, engage in academic activities.
- A hi-touch, hi-tech before & after school program helping 6-13 year olds achieve better grades in school
- Full day care when schools are closed
- Summer programs are intellectually stimulating

4.6 Summer Program (for children 5 to 13 years old)

Our Summer Program is an interactive experience that engages students and allows for experience-based learning. Students will be organized with art projects and strategy games on a daily basis to help prevent summer learning loss. The group leaders in this environment are highly qualified and experienced. This program provides many opportunities for summer field trips and thematic shows on site. Each week of summer is filled with events and challenges that are geared toward a thematic calendar of activities. A Summer Camp registration is required in April for Kindergarten, Elementary and Homework Center students to secure their spot. Activity fees are not included in the camp fees. A separate activity fee charge must be paid in advance during Summer Camp registration. This is a full time program throughout the summer.

4.7 Holiday Care

Child care on school holidays is available for all our students but it must be reserved at least 30 days before the holiday. This program is also available on a space-available basis for non-Starmaker students. Please discuss with Director for space availability.

5. Staff

All prospective staff are interviewed and are subject to reference checks. The State then performs a background check for any accusations of child abuse, utilizing both the State and Federal child abuse databases.

Each staff member is also required to have a medical exam with a written statement from their physician stating that they are physically capable of working with children. When a staff member is hired, they are hired with the understanding that they are under a 90-day probation period. This policy helps us to screen potential staff members so that we select only the best possible person for each position.

The teachers at Starmaker all meet the State of Maryland requirements for teachers and/or a Montessori Certification appropriate to the level at which they teach. All of our Senior Staff members and teachers are required to hold current certificates in child and infant CPR as well as being trained in First Aid. Our staff is made up of various types of trained professionals. We use the State terminology to define our staff positions. We are providing the following definitions (provided by the State of Maryland) to help clarify the positions within a childcare Center and a school.

5.1 Lead Primary and Elementary Faculty

In the primary and elementary environments our lead teachers are college trained personnel qualified to teach at the level in which they are hired. The State of Maryland deems a teacher qualified when she has had at least 120 hours of college and is qualified to teach at the level they are teaching. We require our lead teachers to have their Montessori training or commit to starting their Montessori training prior to employment. We require all lead teachers to take twelve (12) hours of continuing training each year on addition to their CPR and first Aid classes.

5.2 Preschool Teacher/Infant Toddler Teacher/Group Leader

The Maryland Office of Child Care approves preschool teachers. They have had at least two college classes in child development and education or obtained a 90 hour certification in early childhood development. They also have had a minimum of one year of childcare experience and are over 19 years of age. We employ Preschool teachers in various positions throughout the school. Preschool teachers are required to have 12 hours of continuing education training each year.

5.3 Teacher's Assistants

Teacher's assistants help the faculty or the Senior Staff teacher with the children and perform general housekeeping duties in the children's rooms. Teacher's assistants must be 16 yrs of age and must demonstrate a passion to work within the early childhood environment. We strongly encourage our teacher's assistants to have current CPR and First Aid training. Teacher's assistants are now required to have at least 6 hours of continuing education training each year.

5.4 Others

We also utilize specialized instructors in other areas of our programs, such as Foreign Language, Music, Religion, Art Appreciation, and Physical Education. We have made use of various types of volunteers over the years. Our volunteers have come from our Starmaker parents, grandparents, local colleges and high schools. They have helped us in all sorts of ways. To name a few -- they read stories to the children, supervise playground activities, build furniture, make repairs to school equipment and improve the school grounds with the planting of ornamental plants and trees. Police, firemen and other professionals and crafts people occasionally present programs describing their occupations with interesting and informative

demonstrations. We also encourage our parents, grandparents and special friends to volunteer to provide special programs for our students.

5.5 Parent/Teacher Conferences

Scheduled formal Parent/Teacher conferences are held twice a year, for children in the Primary and Elementary Programs: once in the fall and again in the spring and once in the spring for preprimary programs. Informal conferences are held when requested by either the parent or the teacher. Parents are encouraged to have frequent contact with their child's teacher to discuss issues of concern as they occur. The best way to communicate with your child's teacher is to write a note in the classroom or send an email. Each teacher has a message book in their classroom and an email address. If it is an emergency situation, please contact the Director or the CEO.

Parents of our infants and toddlers are required to have monthly communication with their primary caregiver. At this age, the child is changing so rapidly that monthly meetings are needed to keep both the staff and the parents informed of the child's changing needs. The staff member will schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian at a time convenient to both.

5.6 Discipline Policy and Behavioral Concerns

Starmaker's policy is one in which a supportive and humanistic environment is provided which fosters positive interaction between the child and the adults. Employees are taught the difference between discipline and punishment:

- Punishment is to make children suffer to teach them a lesson. This is definitely NOT what we are asking anyone to do.
- Discipline is to model acceptable behavior to help children practice acceptable behavior. Discipline means to TEACH not to punish.

Discipline is the slow time-consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting in a certain manner. Discipline means teaching and it refers to a set of rules and expectations used to teach children how to behave. The ultimate outcome is self-control by the child. In our classroom, natural and logical consequences are implemented as part of an effective discipline process as follows:

1. The teacher will discuss the acceptable behavior prior to the event.
2. The teacher will talk about what it will look like for the child to successfully manage the experience.
3. The teacher will express confidence that the child can be successful.
4. The teacher will talk about what the consequences will be if the child is not successful.
5. The teacher will get the child's agreement.

If the child is successful, the teacher will express her appreciation. If the child is not successful, the teacher will calmly and firmly apply consequence and then express confidence that the child will be successful the next time. The preferred method of discipline is to stop an action before it happens or to redirect the child's actions. The following methods are the only methods to be modeled by our staff:

REDIRECTION (consequence) – redirection is a way of helping children get control of themselves. The thinking chair or peace center is a safe haven for the child's self-reflection and observation.

The following guidelines are used for effective redirection:

- Separate the child from the activity.
- The spot should be a designated spot away from others and toys. The spot should never be frightening. The thinking chair or peace center is an appropriate spot.
- Offer a positive alternative to help the child regain self-control.
- The redirected activity may last until the child is ready to return to their activity or group.

If the child is unable to attain self-control within the classroom setting, the teacher may take the child to the Director. In the event the teacher feels some other method of discipline is necessary, the teacher will consult with the Director to determine a consequence that is related to the behavior. The Director will consult with the parents, the teacher, and the child to determine what additional steps are needed.

If a child has to be removed from their classroom more than twice during the school day, the parent will be called to pick up their child.

Biting/Hitting/Kicking

Biting, hitting, kicking is a behavior that is prevalent with 1 and 2 year old children. Because children of this age have very limited language ability, this type of behavior can become a way of expressing their feelings. Starmaker's procedures include removing the children from the situation, washing the area that bite occurred with soap and warm water, completing an incident report, and informing both children's parents. We will conference with parents should this type of behavior occur to help provide some guidance. If the behavior continues, with a child or staff more than twice in a day, the child will be sent home. If this behavior continues, disenrollment may occur. Parents with children in the infant, toddler, and preprimary environment may request a copy of our biting policy and plan from the office.

In the primary and elementary classrooms, this behavior is not age-appropriate and will not be tolerated.

Disenrollment Process

Every child in our care deserves to be in a safe learning environment. Thus, continuous inappropriate and disruptive behavior that puts other children and teachers at risk, or minimizes the ability of the teachers to provide an appropriate level of instruction to the class will not be tolerated and will lead to disenrollment. After three incident reports are filled, one consultation with parents and teacher, and one parent teacher conference with director and/or CEO, a behavioral report form will be used to document behavior for two additional weeks. During and after the two week period, the teacher will have a parent conference to discuss behavioral concerns. If no improvement occurs, the student will be terminated.

Starmaker reserves the right to disenroll a student from the school without the benefit of the above process if the parent or child is abusive or disruptive to any of the children or staff. We have a no tolerance policy on this issue.

5.7 Student Supplies – What to Bring

Since every room is different, your child's teacher will provide a list of needed supplies before the first day of the school year or at the time of enrollment. Most of the teachers also have a list of items that they would like parents to bring in on a rotational basis. Following are other items that are required:

1. **A change of clothing** - A change of clothes is required for each child. All items must be labeled with your child's name. The clothes will be used in case the child has an accident, requiring a change of clothes. For infants and toddlers, send at least two sets of clothing. If your child is not fully toilet trained, please provide diapers or pull-ups and wipes to last for a month.

Note: Inside shoes or slippers are required for all children who are over 6 months old.

2. Nap Items - Full-day children under the age of five may have a rest period each day unless the parents and staff agree otherwise. We will provide a mat or cot for each child and we request that you provide a small blanket, sheet, and nap bag with straps for hanging on a hook. Mark all nap items with your child's name. The coverings will be sent home each Friday for laundering. Please return them promptly. Infant sheets will be washed at Starmaker.

3. Bottles - Bottles for infants and toddlers should be provided daily with the formula or milk in them.

Bottles should be made of unbreakable material. **All bottles must have lids and be labeled with the child's name.**

5.7.1 All Children

Beginning on the first day of school, all students are requested to bring a pair of inside shoes or slippers to wear indoors. All indoor shoes must be rubber-soled to prevent slipping. These will be worn daily and kept at school. Your care in selecting comfortable inside shoes is appreciated.

To help our students toward self-reliance, we strongly urge you to send your child to school in clothes that can be easily removed when necessary. Every time a child needs to ask for help with a task they could be doing for themselves, their sense of independence and self-confidence is lessened. We discourage shoulder straps, tight snaps, belts or rompers for our younger children. **All children MUST wear underwear to school. On the playground, all girls must wear shorts underneath their skirts or dresses.**

If your child has just become, or is working towards being toilet trained, it is a good idea to send in several changes of clothing with extra underwear. If your child is wearing diapers, your child's teacher will tell you where to leave his or her supply of diapers, pull-ups and wipes.

Leave all jewelry and irreplaceable valuables at home. Jewelry is unsafe and a distraction. We will not be responsible for lost or broken jewelry.

5.7.2 Summer Program

During the summer we do not require the children to follow our dress code. However we strongly encourage your child to wear non-character clothing. We do not want the children to wear any clothing that encourages violence or advertises any products. Summer children should bring in a change of clothing as well as slippers. **All girls must wear shorts underneath their skirts or dresses.**

Note: NAME TAGS and labels should be put on ALL items brought to school, including: coats, jackets, boots, hats, etc. Each child has his/her own storage hook to hang these items, BUT we find, all too often, they get mixed up. Please label all personal items.

5.8 Toys and Personal Items

Books or other educational material that might be of interest to classmates are welcome in the classroom but please let the teacher know about each item. Be sure your child's name is clearly marked on all such articles. **Students may NOT bring toys to the classroom.** Personal items that are brought into the classroom are the responsibility of the student and parent. The staff and children will use care in sharing items that are brought into the classroom, but they cannot guarantee that an item will not be broken or a page in a book torn. Please do not send in any items that would cause you or your child to become upset if it were damaged. All Show and Share items must be brought into school in a brown paper bag, labeled with your child's name and classroom.

Full-day children may bring a security blanket or stuffed animal, if needed, for naptime. These should be left in the child's cubby until nap time and put back after the nap.

5.9 Destruction of School Property

In keeping with our philosophy that the child needs to be held accountable for their actions, we expect the child, who willfully destroys School property, to be held responsible. This may include having the parent replace the damaged equipment or lesson and the child being made to work to correct the action. Lesson or equipment replacements must be done within one week or the cost of replacing the item will be billed to the parent's account.

6. Medical Policy

In accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland, any child entering a school or day care facility must provide evidence of primary immunization against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles, German measles (rubella), and lead screening. Such immunizations will be in accordance with the current schedule provided by the State of Maryland. **We will provide you with the State required Medical Form that must be filled out and signed by your doctor PRIOR to your child's first day at Starmaker. This form must be updated at least once a year or as needed.**

6.1 Medication

The following medication procedures are mandated by the State of Maryland for childcare centers and schools. The essence of this policy requires BOTH THE PHYSICIAN AND THE PARENT to complete a "Physician and Parental Authorization Form" (see Figures 1 and 2). **This form is required for ALL PRESCRIPTION AND NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION INCLUDING TOPICAL MEDICATIONS.** These forms are available at the reception area or request one from the Director.

Every time you take your child to the doctor, you need to have one of the forms with you so your doctor can fill out and sign the Physician Authorization portion if he/she prescribes any medication and you must complete the Parent Authorization portion. **Even for non-prescription medication like Tylenol, topical creams/salves and Benadryl cream, your doctor still needs to fill out and sign the Authorization Form for each type.** Then you will need to fill out the entire Parent Authorization portion. **YOU MUST HAVE A FORM FOR EACH TYPE OF PRESCRIPTION AND NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION YOU FEEL IS NECESSARY FOR YOUR CHILD.**

ALL NON-PRESCRIPTION AND PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS MUST BE IN THE ORIGINAL CONTAINER FROM THE PHARMACY AND MUST BE HANDED ONLY TO A MEDICATION ASSISTANT. Medication assistants are available from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm to receive medication and return medication. The Director is a trained medical assistant. Several other staff are trained as well. Please obtain this information from the office.

What to remember: (forms are available online at www.starmakerschool.org)

- Keep several blank forms handy for when you visit the doctor. Remember, your doctor may issue more than one prescription at a time or you may simply want him/her to authorize the "over-the-counter" treatments like Tylenol for when your child has a fever or antibiotic cream if your child has a scrape on the playground.
- Remember, you need one authorization form for each type of medicine - whether prescription or non-prescription. These forms are only good for one year.

- Make sure the form is ENTIRELY completed - medicine cannot be administered if the form is not filled out properly. This is for your child's safety.
- A parent may not administer medication to their child within the building at any time. Also, as part of this policy, we are required to have a delegating nurse. The nurse is responsible for ensuring we are correctly administering medications, reviewing our medical records and providing periodic training for our staff. Ms. Kathy Brigham is our delegating nurse. If you have any questions regarding this policy, form, or the delegating nurse, please contact the Director or CEO.

6.2 Health Policy

Children are expected to be in good health when in school. Please do not send your child to school if they show any sign of illness. We reserve the right to send a child home if they show definite or continued signs of ill health that might jeopardize the general welfare of the class. If your child has a communicable disease, please notify us the first day of its occurrence and send a note to their teacher stating when their doctor has released them to return to school. It is very helpful for us to know when children are put on and taken off medication. **The first dose of any medication, either prescription or over-the-counter, should be given at home at least 24 hours before bringing the child to school in order to monitor the child for any side effects.**

The following are considered contagious and should be reported to the office immediately: **Impetigo, Conjunctivitis, Head Lice, Streptococcus, Hepatitis, HIV, AIDS, and Chicken Pox.**

State Law requires that children with fevers or communicable diseases are not permitted to attend school. If, at any time, the staff feels that your child is too sick to remain in school, you will be called. We expect you, or someone you designate, to pick up the child immediately. Your child will generally be isolated from their group. **If you are not able to have your child picked up within one hour, you may be assessed a surcharge of \$10.00 per 15 minutes.** We do not have staff available to sit with sick children. It is to your advantage to establish a backup person or persons on whom you can depend in such circumstances. Remember that we have to think of the safety and well-being of **ALL** the children and staff.

Your child will be sent home if they have any of the following:

- Elevated temperature (100 or above, 101 or above for children 6 weeks – 18 months). **After the fever breaks, the child must be given a 24-hour recovery period before returning to Starmaker.**
- Low-grade fever with any one of the following additional symptoms: diarrhea, vomiting, rash, runny thick nasal discharge, and crankiness that is not normal for the child.
- Unidentifiable rash.

Please keep your child at home:

- If they have a low-grade fever, or had one during the previous 24-hour period.
- At least 24-hours after their first dose of an antibiotic each time the antibiotic is prescribed. The reason for this policy is due to the possibility of an allergic reaction by the child to the antibiotic.
- If they have three (3) diarrhea or vomiting episodes.
- If they have pink eye.
- If they have symptoms of a possible communicable disease. (These are usually sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, headache and abdominal pain, or a fever.)

Please notify the school at once if the child does have a communicable disease.

- If the child is vomiting.
- If the child is ill during the night or early morning, keep them home that day. Allow 24 hours after the child has stopped vomiting before sending them back to the School.
- If they have a rash, keep the child home 24 hours after each rash appears to determine if it is contagious.
- If more than one nebulizer/breathing treatment is required daily.
- If they have a cold that is less than four days old.
- If they have heavy, green-colored, nasal discharge.
- If they have a constant cough.
- If they are fussy, cranky, and generally out of sorts.
- If the child is not acting normal and/or is over-tired. (Rest at such times may prevent the development of serious illness.)

Your child may come to school if they have been exposed to a communicable disease, provided the school has been notified so that the incubation period can be discussed and it can be determined on what dates your child should stay home.

6.3 Emergency Policy

Prior to starting your child at the School, you must fill out an Emergency Card. This form is required by the State of Maryland Department of Education, Office of Child Care. This form is required to be updated **annually and as needed**. All parents must supply detailed medical information regarding any information important to their child, e.g., what over-the-counter medications their child can take, any allergies they may have, and immunization records. It is to your child's benefit that you keep the school up-to-date on phone numbers, emergency numbers and other pertinent information.

If your child has a known condition that might require special treatment, please fill out the "Other Special Medical Procedures" portion of the Emergency Card. This will allow us to be prepared to treat your child quickly and accurately. As with all information we have on your child, this information is kept strictly confidential.

In case of accidental injury, we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. If we cannot reach you, we may call the child's physician or our school nurse. We will also call an ambulance or paramedics if we determine one is needed. Until the arrival of a parent, the physician, an ambulance or paramedics, the director or CEO or the School's designated person in charge will make all decisions about the care of the child.

6.4 Minor Injuries

All of our Senior Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid to handle minor injuries such as cuts, scrapes and bruises. If your child is involved in a minor accident, the staff will provide simple first aid.

Parents will be notified immediately if the teacher and the Director feel the injury warrants such action. Normally, you will be immediately notified about eye and head injuries. All other minor injuries will be brought to your attention at the end of the day by the use of our Incident Reports.

Staff are required to fill out an Incident Report whenever they provide first aid. Parents are requested to review and sign the report. These reports are kept in the child's permanent file. If requested, the parent will be provided with a copy of the report.

6.5 Screen Time Policy

Starmaker School, in respect of educational best practices, has decided to adhere to the following guidelines regarding screen time with our students:

Ages 0-24 months

Children within this age range will not be exposed to any screen time during the day at Starmaker School. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under the age of two.

Ages 2 years or older

Limited use of appropriate interactive technology may support, but not replace, creative play, physical activity, hands-on exploration, outdoor experiences, social interactions, and other developmentally appropriate learning activities for children ages 2 years old or older. Students ages 2 years old and older may not be permitted to view more than 30 minutes of age-appropriate, educational passive technology per week. An occasional exception to the weekly passive technology viewing limit may be made for a special event or project. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children should engage in high-quality entertainment media for no more than one to two hours per day.

7. Parental Participation

Your support is a vital part of the school's success. Throughout the years, parental support has helped the teaching and administrative staff maintain the educational goals of the children as their primary objective. Fund raising events in the past have provided capital to purchase curriculum materials and play equipment for the children. By volunteering in some capacity parents develop a greater understanding of school life, get to know members of the staff and other parents, and provide many needed services to the school.

If you have a talent, career, or hobby that you think would be interesting to the children, you are encouraged to make arrangements with the Class Teacher to share this knowledge with the children. Parents are also encouraged to share anything they may have to aid in our different curriculum studies.

Parents can participate in the following ways:

1. Attend the required school events: back to school night in September and an Afternoon of Montessori in February or March.
2. Class parents – call other parents on behalf of the teacher, coordinate class functions, chaperone field trips.
3. Sharing your special skill with a class – teach the children your specialties (i.e., art, music, science, language, sewing, carpentry, or any skill that would supplement our programs and contribute to the children's entertainment and education.)
4. Fund raiser coordinator(s) – help with school fund raising activities, counting money, sorting and distributing the items, phoning other parents to encourage support of the fund raiser.
5. Field Trips – provide transportation and/or supervision on monthly field trips to the public library or on other field trips that may be arranged.
6. Special events coordinator – helping to plan and run special events such as parent education night, holiday events, annual picnic, etc.

7. Community Work Day – parents and staff help beautify the school classrooms and campus on a Saturday.
8. Promoting the school via word of mouth to friends, neighbors, and families with young children.
9. Library volunteer

7.1 Field Trips

All of our programs utilize field trips as part of the educational training of children. As such, we encourage the visiting of some of the wonderful educational/historical sites in our area. It is the policy of Starmaker to require all children to have a signed permission slip to attend any off-site field trip held Monday through Friday only. Three-year old and under are not allowed to ride the bus and need parents to take their children to the field trip. Staff members are not allowed to stay behind with children who do not have a ride as they are needed on the field trips. Please make other arrangements if you cannot attend a field trip with your child (three and under). Please note that the Kindergarten and Elementary program have routine field trips throughout the school year with a separate fee for these trips billed at the beginning of the school year.

We ask for parent participation in ALL of our off-site trips to help us maintain a safe student/adult ratio.

Effective **June 30, 2008**, Maryland law requires children to be in a car seat or booster seat until their 8th birthday, unless they weigh more than 65 pounds or are 4'9" or taller. The law further states that the car seat must fit the child by age, height and weight, and the child must be secured in the seat and vehicle according to the instructions of the vehicle and car seat manufacturers.

8. School/Home Communication

Collaboration and communication between home and school is the key to success for all our children at the School. We use the following means to communicate with our parents:

1. **Parent Handbook** – this document provides parents and interested persons with detailed information about the School and its policies. The handbook is given out to new parents upon enrollment. Updates are distributed to the entire parent community as and when they occur.
2. **Starmaker Headlines** – this newsletter is designed to give parents a quick, easy to read updates about school wide activities and events. This newsletter is published monthly highlighting important happenings in our community.
3. **Nuggets** – A Parent Education Newsletter – this newsletter presents an opportunity for us to share nuggets to help parents in their journey to raise wholesome, healthy, successful children.
4. **Bulletin Boards** – these boards are posted at the front door and in each classroom. The Director, Teachers, and staff use these boards for announcements and information of interest to the parents – please be sure to take a few moments and read the bulletin boards for important information.
5. **Daily Parent/Teacher Communication** – Parents are encouraged to check the "Parent Box" daily.

They are located in each classroom. The Parent Box is the vehicle for distributing correspondence from your child's teacher as well as notices from the School staff. Additionally, parents wishing to communicate with their child's teacher should make use of the Teacher's folder inside the Parent Box. Please use this to drop notes to your child's teacher. Your child's teacher can then contact you. Each senior staff and teacher now has an email address. Parents may wish to communicate via email but remember that the teachers are not always checking their email since they are teaching and caring for your children.

6. **Parent/Teacher Conferences** – Aside from the twice yearly scheduled conferences, parents can request informal/additional conferences to discuss any questions, concerns or problems. Please schedule these directly with your child’s teacher. If you wish to schedule a conference with the Director or CEO, please do not hesitate to do so – we encourage an open-door policy at the School.
7. **Back to School Night** – This night is designated in September in order to introduce parents to the teachers and to familiarize them with our academic philosophy, expectations, and goals. Parents are required to attend.
8. **An Afternoon of Montessori** – This program is held in February or March to highlight particular aspects of the educational curriculum and philosophy. Parents are required to attend.
9. **Starmaker Web Site** – Starmaker has a web site www.starmakerschool.org. You can send email messages to the school at administrator@starmakerschool.org.
10. **Remind App** – Our parent contact system which sends important messages directly to parent’s telephone/email about urgent alerts, early closings, delays and reminders. Be sure to have your correct telephone numbers and email address listed to receive these urgent and emergency alerts.
11. **Twitter** – Our twitter name is @StarmakerSchl – fastest way to get information on closings and delays.
12. **FaceBook** – [Starmakerschool/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/starmakerschool/) – Join the community and like us and view activities, reminders, closings, delays etc.
13. **Email** – All senior staff and teachers have email addresses. Use the teachers’ first initial and last name plus @starmakerschool.org.

9. Abuse, Molestation and Neglect Policy

All educators, employees and volunteers at Starmaker School for Early Education at Wildewood, who have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect are required by law to immediately report such suspicions to the Department of Social Services/Child Protective Services or to the police.

Children are most at risk to be sexually abused by someone they know and trust. About half of sexual abuse (40 to 60%) happens within families. There is no typical sex offender profile--child sexual abuse happens among all racial, religious, age and ethnic groups, and at all socio-economic levels. Knowing the behavioral warning signs that could indicate child sexual abuse makes us more alert to the possibility that an adult is at risk of abusing a child, or that a child has a sexual behavior problem or may be experiencing sexual abuse.

Child abuse is defined as a child who has had:

- Any non-accidental physical or mental injury (i.e. shaking, beating, burning).
- Any form of sexual abuse (i.e. sexual exploitation).
- Emotional abuse (i.e. excessive belittling, berating, or teasing which impairs the child’s psychological growth).
- At risk behavior (i.e. placing a child in a situation which might endanger him by abuse of neglect).
- Injuries which are inconsistent with the explanation given.

Child neglect is defined as a child who has been:

- Abandoned
- Denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally, for example a child who has not been provided appropriate food, clothing, shelter, education, mental care and supervision, or
- Allowed to live under circumstances, conditions, or associations injurious to his/her wellbeing an abused child could be anyone eighteen years of age or younger, who has been inflicted with physical injury or injuries other than by accidental means, has injuries which are at a variance with the history given them, or is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment such as but not limited to malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment, or cruel punishment.

Child neglect is defined as a child who has been:

- The child has bruises, broken bones, lacerations, puncture marks, swollen areas, missing hair, bites, or burn marks.
- The child has frequent signs of major or minor injuries.
- The child has different injuries in various stages of healing.
- The parent or child gives odd or impossible explanations for the child's injuries.
- The child is frequently tardy or absent.
- The child receives overdue, unsuitable, or no treatment for injuries.

Emotional abuse indicators:

- The child cannot interact well socially, has very low self-esteem, or is listless, apathetic, or depressed and cannot respond to normal adult behavior.
- The child has a parent who treats the child in unusual or abnormal ways, such as refusing to care for or talk to the child, treating the child as an object, keeping the child from normal social experiences, punishing the child for his/her normal behavior, and/or thinking or feeling in a consistently negative way about the child.

Sexual abuse indicators:

Physical signs: Pain or injury in the mouth or the genital areas, irritated, reddened, or itching genitals, urinary infections, difficulty with urination, and/or unusual orders.

Behavioral signs: Fear of a person or of certain places, clinging, anxiety, a sudden interest in the genitals of others, unsuitable sexual activity for the child's age, and a return to infantile behavior.

Neglect indicators:

- The child is anxious about his or her survival.
- The child lacks energy or is overactive.
- The child is unable to concentrate or to play.
- The child often seeks attention.
- The child is hungry and/or dirty.
- The child's clothes are inappropriate for the weather.

Teachers may suspect abuse when:

- The child shows sudden behavior changes or erratic behavior.
- The child becomes withdrawn.
- The child is hostile or extremely aggressive.
- The child is suspicious or watchful of others' actions, as if fearing them.

Starmaker has a Zero Tolerance Policy with Abuse and Neglect:

Given our adherence to a Zero Tolerance Policy with abuse and neglect, it is our plan to ensure that the staff is aware of the signs of abuse or neglect. The staff at Starmaker must take immediate action to help the child whom they suspect is being abused or neglected. As mandated reporters, the director and teachers of Starmaker must report actual or suspected abuse or neglect or the imminent risk of serious harm of any child to **Child Protective Services at 240-895-7016 (8 am – 4 pm) or 301-475-8016 (after 4 pm).**

In the event of suspected abuse and/or neglect staff actions are as follows:

Treat injuries: The teachers treat any immediate injury that is within the scope of their first aid training.

Provide clothing: The teachers provide appropriate clothing for a child who needs it.

Increase nutrition at school: The teachers provide extra snacks or lunches for a child who is hungry.

Emotional support of a child: The teachers provide emotional support within their role as the child's teacher.

Reporting abuse:

Here are Starmaker's protocols for reporting child abuse:

1. Reference the State law that requires child care providers who suspect that a child is being abused or neglected to report such suspicion to the local CPS agency: <http://dhs.maryland.gov/child-protective-services>.
2. Identify the indicators or the clues that suggest possible child abuse or neglect; The designated coordinators for child maltreatment issues are the Director and Assistant Director.
3. The coordinators should preferably contact CPS or law enforcement. However, in urgent circumstances, any employee can contact CPS or law enforcement. The coordinators could be brought in later to continue to maintain contact with CPS and law enforcement.
4. Starmaker has a professional obligation for maintaining the confidentiality of the child, the child's family, and the caregiver, including who has a "need to know," all reports are to be kept confidential and locked in the Directors office separate from the child or teacher's regular file.
5. Below, please see the specific information that the teacher or reporter needs in order to make a report;
6. The Director or assistant director will meet with parents to communicate with the parents after consultation with CPS or when a report is filed;
7. The Director or assistant director will be responsible for monitoring or receiving communication or feedback from CPS once the report has been filed;
8. The Owner/Executive director or their designee is responsible for communicating with the media, if necessary, for cases where a child fatality or a child abuse accusation has been in the press;

9. If the accuser is a staff person, the accuser will be removed from the environment while an investigation is taking place;
10. The Director will follow up to determine the outcome of the report and communicate with the school community as necessary.

If you suspect that a child is being abused, please notify the director or assistant director immediately so that the Child Protective Services agency or police authorities can be contacted. In urgent situations, any staff may contact Child Protective Services directly at 410-366-1980.

Contents of the report should include:

- Name of the child who is the alleged victim;
- Age of the child;
- Home address or address where the child can be reached;
- Parents' names, phone numbers, and addresses, if known;
- Type of suspected abuse;
- Alleged perpetrator, if known;
- Specific physical and behavioral indicators of the maltreatment;
- Opinion of whether the child is in imminent danger;
- Name, phone number, and address of the reporter.

Prevention of abuse and neglect in school

It is also the responsibility of Starmaker to prevent any abuse or neglect that could happen at our school. In order to prevent abuse and neglect at our school the following are done:

- Review discipline policies on a yearly basis;
- Brainstorm to help teachers figure out ways to deal with disruptive behaviors;
- Review the indicators of abuse and neglect on a yearly basis;
- Conduct a thorough check of the references of new staff;
- Orient new staff using the above policy;
- Supervise new teachers on a close and consistent basis;
- Continue to conduct a fingerprinting check and background check in the abuse and neglect registry currently conducted by MSDE;
- Parents, volunteers, and 3rd party vendors are directly supervised by the teaching staff or are in plain view of other staff.

Policy protection of staff as mandated reporters:

Starmaker will not discharge, discriminate, or retaliate against any employee who, in good faith, files an abuse or neglect report in accordance with our policies.

9.1 Sexual Harrassment

Sexual harassment is **unwanted** and **unwelcome** behavior of a sexual nature which interferes with a person's right to learn, study, work, achieve, or participate in school activities in a comfortable and supportive atmosphere. Sexual harassment is not a joke, nor is it flirting! It is illegal.

It could be sexual harassment if you are:

- Staring or leering at parts of someone else's body.
- Sharing comments, gestures, or jokes of a sexual nature.
- Displaying sexual pictures or objects.
- Spreading sexual rumors or commenting about sexual behavior.
- Repeatedly pressuring for dates or unwanted sexual activity.
- Touching, grabbing, or pinching.
- Asking for sexual favors in exchange for something.
- Physical sexual assault.

Sexual harassment towards any student or staff will not be tolerated. It will be grounds for immediate disenrollment/termination.

10. Bullying

Bullying refers to conduct that:

- Adversely affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities;
- Is a result of repeated negative actions (intentional, aggressive behavior) by one or more other students over time; and
- Occurs in a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power.

A student is **harassed** when he or she perceives or experiences discomfort with identity issues regarding race, color, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or other identifying characteristics, and whose ability to participate in and benefit from the school's educational programs or activities is adversely affected. Harassment causes harm from discriminatory conduct that is pervasive or severe.

A student is **bullied** when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to intentional negative actions on the part of one or more students, and whose ability to participate in and benefit from the school's educational programs or activities is adversely affected. Bullying causes harm from repeated negative conduct in a relationship with an imbalance of power.

Bullying can be:

- Verbal (put-downs, taunts, name-calling).
- Physical (pushing, kicking, punching).
- Relational (rumors, social rejection, exclusion).

Not all confrontational behavior can or should be defined as bullying. Kids are active and impulsive, and they're going to have spur-of-the-moment scuffles, friendship spats and wrestling matches that occasionally

get out of hand. Everyday play-related conflict can make kids stronger because they learn through experience how to compromise, negotiate, and forgive.

- Bullying, on the other hand, does the exact opposite. It systematically undermines children's self-esteem; whether it's physical or emotional, it can cause hurt feelings, fear, and anxiety—even beginner bullying between little children. Being picked on, pushed around, and shunned is not acceptable at any age.
- And bullying can have consequences for bullies, too. They may have a hard time forming real friendships, which can lead to problematic relationships in all parts of their lives.

Principles

- Bullying is unacceptable in any form.
- All children have a right to an education free from fear, harassment or degradation.
- Bullying is a problem both for the bully and victim alike.
- Best outcomes follow when Starmaker works with parents to address concerns about bullying behavior and victimization.

Prevention

Starmaker has a zero tolerance towards bullying. All staff have a responsibility to address any and all behavior deemed as bullying.

There is no single way to tell if a child is being bullied if they don't tell you, but there are some social, emotional and physical signs parents and teachers can look out for."

Bullying is not always obvious to adults. Key signs can include:

- Bruises, cuts and scratches.
- Poor eating and sleeping.
- Not wanting to go to school.
- Bedwetting.
- Avoiding social events.
- Complaints about headaches or stomach aches.
- Missing property.
- Torn clothing.

Anti-Bullying Procedure

The key anti-bullying principles are:

1. Positive School culture;
2. Effective leadership;
3. A school-wide approach;
4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
5. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures);
6. Effective supervision and monitoring of students;

7. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behavior (including use of established intervention strategies);
8. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy
 - Starmaker will maintain a positive school culture that promotes kindness, peace, respect for others and self, empathy, as well as tolerance.
 - When bullying behavior is initially observed, effective supervision and monitoring of students will be required in the classroom as well as on the playground. The director or assistant director may observe the classroom as well to determine triggers or conflicts.
 - When behavior is unacceptable and recurring, the teacher will document consistently for a period of two weeks to be able to show a pattern of behavior unacceptable in the classroom.
 - Starmaker will meet with the parent of the child with bullying behavior to work out a suitable strategy.
 - A plan will be developed between parent and management to work together in the home and at School, which will be reviewed on a regular basis. Outside services may be involved to provide advice and practical help if needed.
 - When bullying behaviors are not stemmed or plans for modifying behaviors are not adopted, the school has the option of disenrolling the child with the bullying behavior.

Parental Involvement

Starmaker welcomes the active involvement of parents (both victim and bully) in bringing this problem under control.

Starmaker reserves the right to disenroll any family that bullies our employees.

HANDBOOK RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Please sign below, indicating that you have received the
Parent Handbook. Please return to School Director.

Child's name

Child's Age

Child's name

Child's Age

Child's name

Child's Age

Parent/Guardian Name

Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Name

Signature

Date

