

STEP BY STEP

MONTESSORI

PARENT HANDBOOK

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Step By Step Montessori Preschool

"A Beautifully Prepared Environment"

Ages: 12 Months through Five Years

Class Schedule: 8:30am-12:30pm

Enrichment: 12:30pm-4:00pm

Extended Day: 7:30am-5:30pm

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ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

1. **Agreement Form**: Each child must have a completed Agreement Form signed by both a parent and the School Director. The completed and executed agreement form establishes the services to be provided and the fees and payment schedules for the services
2. **Emergency Contact/ Parent Consent Form**: Each child must have a completed emergency contact/parent consent form submitted by the first day of school.
3. **Child Health Assessment**: The state of Pennsylvania requires that this form be completed and signed by a licensed physician within 30 days of beginning child care.

TUITION AND REGISTRATION FEES

The Registration Fee is in place to establish a tentative agreement between Step By Step and the Parent/Guardian. The non-refundable \$50.00 fee is to register the child and hold a spot in the appropriate room for him/her. Each year at the time of enrollment, a \$50 non-refundable fee for returning students is required. The registration fee assures each prospective student a classroom placement. This form does not constitute a binding contract in reference to tuition fees or discounts. This is only for security of placement for the following school year.

Tuition is calculated into 12 equal installments starting in September through August of the following school year. You may terminate this agreement with a 2 week written notice. Any prorated tuition will be returned. Parents not wishing to attend summer camp must do this in writing by May 21. In the event that a child is withdrawing before the end of the month, tuition will be calculated by a daily rate for the number of days attending in that month. You may drop tuition checks in the wooden box located at the sign in desk.

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month. After the 6th day of the month Tuition that is not paid will be considered late. A \$10/month late fee will be automatically added to your tuition invoice. After 30 days of delinquency you child may not return to Step by Step until all payments are made current. We appreciate your cooperation with this schedule, so that we may meet the schools financial obligations by the 1st of each month. Your prompt payments are appreciated.

A \$35 handling fee will be charged for all returned checks. In the event that more than two checks are returned for any reason, we will no longer be able to accept checks from you. All future payments will have to be made in cash or money order.

Extra hours are billed at 8.50/hour and are due the day the services are rendered. Please try to give 24 hours when utilizing this service. Please mark in the extra hour's book at the front desk if you would prefer to be billed extra hours will be invoiced the month following the hours utilized.

Tuition is to be paid for sick days, vacation days, and any day that your child is absent. Make-up days are not possible due to a full enrollment and staffing rations. Tuition, registration fees, discounts and hourly rates can be changed without notice prior to a signed agreement. After a signed agreement is made between Step By Step Montessori and their clients, there can be no change in tuition costs or hourly rates for the academic year that the agreement is covering. Extended vacations for longer than 2 weeks automatically terminates the agreement between Step by Step Montessori and the Parent or Guardian. However, if payment of tuition is paid for the time of absence the child's spot will be held and kept available for their return.

ILLNESSES

If your child contracts a contagious illness (other than a cold), please inform the school office so that other parents may be advised. Children who have a fever, earaches, pink eye, vomiting or diarrhea at school will be sent home. A child who has had any of these symptoms the previous day or night should not be brought to school. When recovering from a fever, a child should be kept home for a full day after the fever subsides. If you have any questions or are unsure if you should bring your child, please call the office in the morning and we can discuss your situation.

If a child is sent home with a fever, each teacher will have a sick form sent home with your child stating the symptoms and degree of temperature. There will also be a date written on the form that will inform you of the earliest date the child can return to school. This will help us keep spreading of illnesses to a minimum. Thank you in advance for adhering to this sick policy.

Only prescription medication may be given to children at school or medicine accompanied by a Doctor's written permission. Teachers may not administer fever-reducing medication without a parent's written consent. There is a medication log located on the front desk. This must be filled out each time that medication is to be administered. The log must be completed with specific instructions for the administration of medication. Prescription medications must be in their original containers along with the doctors contact information.

SBS Biting Policy

Explanations, policies and procedures regarding biting at Step By Step Montessori

A child biting another child is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors in a group childcare setting. It can occur without warning, is difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the parents, and the caregivers involved.

Biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between thirteen and twenty-four months of age. Toddlers try it out as a way to get what they want from another toddler. They are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a sure-fire way to cause the other child to drop what they are holding so the biter can pick it up. However, they experience the disapproval of the adults nearby and eventually learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing difficult feelings.

For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power.

No matter what the cause, biting in a group situation causes strong feelings with all involved. It does help, however, to be aware of the potential problem before it happens, and to form a plan of action if it does occur. SBS has developed the following plan of action to be used if and when biting occurs in any of our rooms.

When a child is bitten:

For the biter:

1. The biter is immediately removed and with a calm but firm voice is told, "We don't bite-biting hurts." Avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the biter. The caring attention is focused on the victim.
2. The biter is not allowed to return to the play and is talked to on a level that the child can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt your friends. We don't put our teeth on people." Or "That hurts Johnny when you bite him, he is sad."

3. Redirect the child to other play.
4. Complete an incident report and notify the parents of the biter.
5. If an occurrence happens twice in one day the parent/guardian will be called to pick up the biting child. The child may return the following class day.

For the victim:

1. Separate the victim from the biter.
2. Comfort the child.
3. The wound of the bitten child will be assessed and cleansed with soap and water and ice applied.
4. Complete an incident report and notify parents of the victim.

Confidentiality of all children involved will be maintained.

If biting continues:

1. Room staff meet with the director on a routine basis for advise, support and strategy planning.
2. Chart each occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances in an effort to determine patterns.
3. "Shadow" children who indicate a tendency to bite:
 - Head off biting situations before they occur.
 - Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
 - Adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs.
4. "Shadow" children who have a tendency to be bitten:
 - Head off biting situations.
 - Teach responses to potential biting situations: "No" or "Don't hurt me!"
5. Work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.
6. Hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
7. Consider early transition of a child "stuck" in a biting behavior pattern for a change of environment, if developmentally appropriate.
8. Prepare the parents of the biting child for the possibility that the child may have to be removed from the school and help them to make contingency plans.
9. If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, school, and other children, termination of the child from school enrollment/*or the duration a/the biting stage* may occur. Written warning will be given to the parents before this action will be taken.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

Generally, SBS follows the Downingtown Area School District for school closings due to inclement weather. In certain circumstances the staff may vary from DASD closing/late starts. There will also be an email sent out regarding any changes in normal operating hours. A two hour delay means that there will be no before school care and the school will open at 10:30am. Closures due to inclement weather will still require payment.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The first few days of school can be a difficult transition for both student and parent. Please try and be sensitive to all students by allowing your child to walk into his/her classroom himself. Should your child be hesitant to leave you when taking him/her to the classroom, be confident that almost always a child will become happy within minutes after a parent has left, especially when he/she becomes involved with the interesting activities in the school. The staff is trained to meet your child's needs with great sensitivity. If your child continues crying more than 15 minutes after you have left, we will call to advise you. There will be a greeter in the front hallway by the cubbies that will help with the transition and make sure your child gets to his/her classroom. This is especially important if you are running late. The Toddler classroom is the first classroom, and the children in that room are the most sensitive to adults walking through. If your child is in the Toddler classroom your cubbies are in the classroom, so you will need to walk your child in. However, a swift exit is the best way, so that your child can become an independent and self-confident individual.

On the first day of class, please bring the following, clearly marking each item with your child's name:

- 1) A current picture for our friendship tree.
- 2) One plastic bag with a change of clothes
- 3) Pull-ups or diapers if necessary
- 4) Wipes (for changes and face washing)
- 5) A box of Kleenex (We go through many)
- 6) Lunch in Lunch Box
- 7) Crib sheet for Infants and Pre Casa I/II; Beach Towel for Casa Classroom Students (if your child stays for extended day or enrichment)

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

It is imperative that arrival and dismissal times be closely adhered to. The time before class and after is vital for teacher preparation to ensure a smooth and productive day. We ask that you arrive no earlier than five minutes before the start of class and pick up your child promptly at 12:30 pm or 4:00 pm or 5:30pm. After which a late fee of \$1 .00/ minute will be charged to your account. At the 5:30pm pickup late fees must be paid on the day of late services to the teacher who is staying late. Please make arrangements to have a cash or check ready for disbursement when you pick your child up. Thank you for understanding that our teachers often have second jobs, school or family obligations to attend to.

Please sign-in at the front desk when arriving and sign-out when departing. This is imperative when we are tracking who is in attendance in case of a fire drill or other emergency situation.

We require a written note when your child will be picked up by someone other than the parents stated on the emergency contact sheet. However, the individual picking up must be listed as an authorized person to whom the child can be released. Please advise them that they will be asked to show a staff person their picture identification. We will not allow any child to leave with a person we do not know and whom we have not been notified of previously.

At the end of each day, parents should always empty the child's cubby so that notes and other communications, as well as artwork may be taken home.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

Monthly calendars are emailed in the beginning of the month to announce important events, units of study, curriculum themes, phonetic sound study, etc. Each teacher will email a calendar with details and special events regarding their particular class.

SHARING DAY

Every Friday, the children are invited to share an educational item with the class.

This item hopefully will relate to our weekly theme.

BIRTHDAYS

Children's birthdays may be celebrated on their actual birth date or the closest school day to it. Parents may bring a simple snack to share with their child's class. Donut holes, cookies, mini muffins or mini cupcakes are suggestions for a snack.

A "Celebration of Life" story is included in this handbook. Please write your child's story and bring it along with a timeline of pictures of their life to share with their classmates.

If you are planning a home party for your child, please do not hand out invitations in school. Likewise, if your child is attending a party after school, please do not send gifts to school with your child. In the past, we have found that these situations can be upsetting for those who are not invited. This can create hurt feelings and sad children. It would be more appropriate to mail invitations and plan weekend parties.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Step By Step has its own school year calendar that will be included in this packet. We try to coordinate with the local school districts for your convenience. However, there are {may be} slight differences due to in-service days and non-federal holidays. A calendar will be included in this packet. Any changes made to this calendar due to emergency closings will be addressed towards the beginning of April.

HOLIDAYS

Halloween is celebrated in our school by focusing on the season and "celebrate" the beauty of autumn. We have a Harvest Festival and a parade for the children.

Thanksgiving is a time when we all share in the "Thanksgiving Feast". The value of thankfulness is brought to the children's consciousness by helping them become aware of the needs of other people in their community. The children are encouraged to find ways to show how thankful they are for the things they have and to reach out to those less fortunate.

Christmas is a time when stories and experiences are presented that embody the true spirit of giving and sharing. We will discuss various cultures and traditions from around the world. We will conclude this study with a "Festival of lights". The children can learn hands-on about each one of these celebrations. Parents are encouraged to volunteer and bring their family traditions to share with the other students.

Easter is celebrated by observing "new life" which is so prevalent in the spring. We omit discussions of

the Easter bunny. But, concentrate on discussions of plants, baby farm animals and flowers.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Individual conferences between parents and teachers will be scheduled in the winter and in the spring. The winter conference is not mandatory, however it is encouraged. The spring conference is a mandatory conference to discuss your child's cumulative progress and plans for the coming year. A conference sign-up sheet will be posted on the front desk by your child's teacher.

Additionally, there will be two evaluations of your child's progress reported. One will be approximately 12 weeks into the school year. This will help you see how your child is "normalizing" into the Montessori environment. The second evaluation will be towards the end of the school year. This will inform you in detail how your child is doing within each curriculum area.

If at anytime during the year that you have concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to call and schedule either a phone conference or a conference in person with your child's teacher. Please remember that before school is not the time for such a conference. This is the time to start of the day. However, do not be discouraged. A note out front telling your child's teacher that you would like to see them or a phone call will always be addressed.

SPECIALS

Your child will be involved in four scheduled "specials" at Step By Step (each week); Spanish, Yoga/Stretch N Grow will run on alternating weeks and sharing day.

FUNDRAISERS

Step By Step encourages participation in a variety of fundraisers throughout the year. All proceeds of these fundraisers go towards the enhancement of your children's school. If you have an idea for a fundraiser or are interested in heading a committee for a fundraiser let the Director or Owner know. Thank you in advance for all of your hard work and efforts!

SECURITY SYSTEMS

We have a lock down policy at our schools. The doors are kept locked at all times and magnetic security system with number pad is installed (at the Pennsylvania Ave location).The security code will be given to each parent upon registration to the school. In order to open the door from the inside a green magnetic button must be pushed in conjunction with the egress bar on the inside of the door. Sometimes this can be cumbersome with all you have in your arms, but it is for the safety of your child. Please let your child know that they can never push the buttons on the outside or inside without an adult present. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

There is also a parent portal on our website with a username and password just for our Step By Step families. The username is parents. The pass code is the same as our security code for the door.

The playground is also devised so that the children should not leave unless released by a member of our staff. Please help us by not picking your child up over the gate or allowing them to open the lock by themselves. Since our parking lot can get very busy at drop off and pick up, please make sure that you hold your child's hand while crossing to your car. Also, we are in a residential area and must be cognizant of our neighbor when coming in and out of the entrance. The speed limit should be 5 mph on Western Avenue and into our lot. Thank you in advance for your safety considerations.

Sarah Proskine Armento: Owner

Tammy Biondi: Director

Sarah Proskine, Kim Reilly, Laura Murray, Tara Morton: Pre Casa I

Lauren Leppo and Cristen Macinnis: Pre Casa II

Julie Trego and Samantha Sweet: Casa

- Our staff is Montessori Certified/Trained, First Aid and CPR Certified, Child Abuse, FBI and State Police Background Checks. All lead teachers have obtained a Bachelor's Degree in early childhood or related studies.