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Thornhill Montessori; Learning Centre

Ages 3 to 5

(416) 347-6084

I. INTRODUCTION

This handbook is meant to serve both as a parent reference manual and a comprehensive collection of policies/procedures by which the Centre operates. Please review its contents as it will ensure an easy transition into school life at Thornhill Montessori Learning Centre.

Program Statement

Our program is Montessori based, and is in keeping with the Ontario Ministry of Education's policy on programming and pedagogy (How Does Learning Happen?). Our program builds on the understanding that learning and development happens within the context of relationships among children, families, educators and their environments.

In broad terms our goals include:

Promote the physical well-being of the children, by providing healthy meals, daily outdoor play, rest periods, a clean and safe environment, weekly skating and gym, quiet time, story time, group and individual play, while giving consideration to the individual needs of each child

Encourage and support children to interact and communicate with their peers, parents and staff in a positive manner, by providing and maintaining a beautifully prepared child-centred environment, by being responsive to children's cues, through role modeling, problem solving and behaviour management

Foster the engagement of, and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children by means of open communication with teachers, opportunities to volunteer, monthly calendars, newsletters, parent/teacher interviews, and report cards

Involve local community partners such as the City of Markham for weekly skating, and the use of baseball diamonds, soccer fields and outdoor play space; and Eighty 8 restaurant for emergency shelter

Support staff in relation to continuous professional learning including; opportunities to acquire new information, to upgrade and improve their skills, knowledge and approaches, and for discussion and collaborative inquiry among staff members and with others in the community.

The Montessori Program

Children are encouraged to excel academically and are challenged at their own level and ability regardless of their age. The Montessori materials are used as a concrete representation of abstract concepts and used to assist students in visualizing and understanding complex concepts and global connections.

The 2 ½ - 5 Montessori classroom is organized into several curriculum areas including; practical life skills, sensorial activities, language, math, geometry, botany, zoology, geography and history. The curriculum is carefully structured and integrated to demonstrate the connections among these different subject areas. Recognizing these interrelationships help children develop a global vision, to see things as part of a whole.

For each level of the Montessori curriculum there is an extensive collection of carefully defined educational materials. Each piece of the material isolates and teaches one concept or skill at a time, bringing the abstract into a clear and concrete form. The Montessori materials are designed to allow children to work independently by means of self-correcting materials, at their own pace, with on-going support from the teacher as required. The classroom operates on the principle of ‘freedom within limits’, which provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences.

Materials are carefully organized and displayed on open shelves ready to be discovered by the child. The Montessori classroom nurtures and inspires, leading children to ask questions, think for themselves, explore, investigate, research and discover. Children are viewed as being competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. Growth comes from activity. Children learn naturally in this prepared environment, through hands on experience. It promotes understanding, not memorization (“I hear – I forget, I see – I remember, I do – I understand”).

The Montessori classroom brings together children in a multi-age group from 3-5. This allows the teacher to develop a close relationship with each child, thus knowing his/her learning style and ability. It also encourages a strong sense of community, facilitates student discussion and stimulates collaborative learning. The Montessori curriculum is organized into a spiral of integrated studies whereby lessons are introduced simply and concretely initially, and are reintroduced several times over succeeding years, with increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity. It is for this reason that the three-year cycle of attendance is recommended.

Licensing and Other Inspections

Thornhill Montessori Learning Centre is a fully licensed facility under the Ministry of Education, and therefore meets all of the requirements of the Child Care and Early Years Act. We are required to achieve and maintain compliance with the standards set out in Ontario Regulation 137/15 under the CCEYA at all times. In addition, we are in compliance with Zoning, Building, Health and Safety and Fire Inspections.

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Hours of Operation

We are open Monday to Friday 8am – 5pm from September to June.

TMLC offers a 3, 4 or 5 mornings per week program, from 9:00am to 12:00 noon; or a full-day program from 9:00am to 3:30pm.

For the convenience of working parents, the school provides an early drop off option (8:00-9:00am) and an afterschool option (3:30 – 5:00) at no extra cost. Parents are expected to pick up their children promptly at 12 noon or by 5:00 pm. Parents who are late picking up their children will be charged \$1.00 per minute after 12:00 noon or after 5:00pm. Late pickups will be recorded and billed at the end of each month.

Admission Requirements

TMLC is licensed to enrol children from the ages of 2.5 to 5 years of age, up to a maximum of 11 students per day. Children must be turning 3 before December 31 in the year they are starting school, and be fully toilet trained.

Early admission is offered to current TMLC families first. Remaining spots are filled on a first come, first serve basis.

Upon deciding that you would like to register your child at TMLC, the following is a list of items that must accompany each completed enrolment application form.

- 1) Nine post-dated cheques for the school year as follows; first and last month (Sept & June) dated for Sept 1, and 8 cheques dated for the first of each month (Oct 1 – May1)
- 2) A non-refundable application fee/deposit of \$200.
- 3) A copy of child’s birth certificate.
- 4) A copy of child’s health card.
- 5) A copy of child’s most recent report card from last school attended (if applicable).
- 6) Copies of documentation regarding physical or medical conditions, including detailed instructions on administering any medication required.
- 7) A copy of child’s immunization record.
- 8) A recent photograph of your child.

Upon completion of all the above mentioned items, please contact the school for a registration appointment.

Monthly Calendars

Calendars are provided to parents at the beginning of each month identifying holidays, French, Music, Skating and Gym classes as well as the Dolch sight words for the week.

Daily Schedule (subject to change)

8:00 – 9:00	Before school activities
9:00-9:30	Free play
9:30 – 9:50	Story time
9:50 – 10:10	Circle time (date, weather, news, lessons, words of the week)
10:10 – 10:30	Snack
10:30 – 11:00	Montessori Materials/Music/French/Skating*
11:00 – 12:00	Outdoor play/Gym**
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 3:00	Naps (as required)
	Language/Math/Phonics/Journal
	Montessori Materials/Lessons
3:00 – 3:15	Snack
3:30-4:00	Free play
4:00 – 5:00	Outdoor play (weather permitting)

* Skating, Fridays October - March 10:30 – 11:30

** Gym, Fridays April – June 11:00am-12:00 noon in the arena (outdoor play will move to 1pm on these days)

Newsletters

In addition, at the end of each term (December, March and June) a detailed newsletter is provided to parents either by email or hard copy. The newsletter summarizes all the activities and achievements of the past term and provides an advanced look at what’s ahead.

III. REGISTRATION

Program Options and Tuition

Please visit the school for an up-to-date tuition schedule

Half-time Program 9:00am -12:00pm 3, 4 or 5 mornings a week

Full-time Program 9:00am – 3:30pm 2*, 3, 4, or 5 full days a week

* 2 days a week for JK/SK students who also attend public school

There is no extra charge for before and after school (8-9am and 3:30-5pm).

If tuition is paid in full (for the whole school year) in September, there is a 5% discount on total tuition.

A one-time non-refundable application fee/deposit of \$200 must accompany each registration.

Nine post-dated cheques for the school year (Sept 1 – May 1) dated for the first of each month must accompany the application form at the time of registration. September’s cheque is for 2 months tuition, September and June. (non-refundable after Sept.1)

NSF cheques

There will be a \$50.00 charge for any NSF cheques. Two consecutive NSF cheques will necessitate a certified cheque for the remaining months.

Refunds

School fees are based on registration for the full school year, and as our operational costs do not change, fees will not be refunded nor pro-rated should your child be absent for any reason (including illness, vacations or statutory holidays). As well, the full monthly tuition is applicable no matter what point the child begins or ends school during the month.

Early Withdrawal

Sixty days written notice is required in the event of early withdrawal from the school. Tuition will be due for the sixty days following proper notification, at which point any post-dated cheques on file will be returned. No partial month refunds will be given. The pre-paid tuition for June is non-refundable. No refunds will be given after the March Break.

Income Tax Receipts

Tax receipts will be issued early in the New Year (January/February), and again in June for students not returning the following year.

IV. DAILY ROUTINES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

First Days of School/Settling-in Period/Dismissal From School

For many children this will be the first time in an organized class setting without their parents/caregivers. There may be anxiety and/or tears in the first few days/weeks of school as your child gets used to their new routine. It's helpful if you say goodbye, and let your child know that you will be back to pick them up shortly. The teachers are there to comfort your child while you are gone. If your child is experiencing prolonged separation difficulties, the teachers are flexible and will work with you and your child to ensure a smooth transition for everyone.

However, should the Supervisor determine that your child is not ready for, or not benefiting from the program, a meeting will be arranged with the parents to discuss the appropriate action. If it is determined that TMLC is not a good fit for your child, a two week notice period will be given at which time parents should seek alternate arrangements.

It is the school's prerogative to dismiss a child from the school;

- For non-payment of tuition fees
- If the behaviour of the child is extremely disruptive to the well-being of the class
- Where the emotional and /or physical welfare of the children and/or staff is jeopardized

Arrival/Departure Procedures

Parents must accompany their children inside the building and facilitate the morning routine by helping their children to get undressed, hang up outdoor clothes and perform any bathroom routines if necessary. Please ensure that the teacher acknowledges the students arrival before you depart.

Children are released only to those who have authorization to pick up as per the enrolment form completed at the time of registration. Please notify the school in advance when someone other than those you have authorized will be picking up your child. This person will be required to show valid photo ID.

Security

TMLC staff take the responsibility of caring for students very seriously by protecting the safety and security of every child to the best of their abilities.

During the school year the arena is operational and open during the day for skating. During this time there are two City of Markham employees on-site at all times.

In keeping with the Ministry of Community and Social services, all teaching staff, student teachers, and volunteers (including parents) must provide a Vulnerable Sector Police Check.

Change of Address/Phone number/Employment

It is imperative that the school be notified immediately of any change in the family home address, place of employment, or telephone numbers (cell, work, home), to ensure that parents are immediately accessible in the case of an emergency.

Communication

Each child has a 'mailbox' located above their cubby. These are used for communication from the school including notes, information, updates, calendars, permission forms etc. Please make sure to check your child's mailbox regularly.

At TMLC we encourage and strive to maintain an open communication policy between parents and staff. Comments, concerns or questions are welcomed and can be relayed verbally, by phone, text or through email correspondence at thornhillmontessori@hotmail.com.

If you wish to formally discuss your child's progress or development we would be happy to meet with you at any time throughout the year.

Media

We would like to tell the community about the many positive things taking place in our school. However, we want to strike the right balance between getting our message out and respecting the wishes of parents/guardians who do not want their children photographed.

Photos will only be allowed with the Principal's permission and will not be used for commercial gain. Photos may be used both in news publications and on the Centre's website. Please sign and return the media consent form indicating your wishes.

Absences

If your child will be late or absent, please call the school before 8:00am. If your child will be absent due to illness, please provide any important details about the illness, as this may help to identify symptoms in other children and in some cases public health may need to be notified.

Clothing

Please leave a full change of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear and socks) in your child's cubby. Clearly label all clothing and footwear with your child's name.

Children must be dressed in clothing appropriate for the weather as outside play is part of our daily program, weather permitting. This includes applying sunscreen at home, before school, and wearing a hat during hot weather, rain boots and splash pants in the spring, and snow suits, boots, hats and mittens in the winter.

Toilet Training

Children must be fully toilet trained, out of diapers and able to use the washroom independently, including manoeuvring clothing and hand washing.

Parents are responsible for ensuring there is a change of clothes available at all times in the child's cubby in case of occasional toilet training accidents.

Toys

Children are not permitted to bring toys from home to school, unless it is a cherished stuffed animal to help the child transition early in the year. Toys may get lost, broken or stolen and often cause conflicts between the children. TMLC will not be held responsible for lost, broken or stolen items.

Volunteers

Any person (parents, co-op students etc) wishing to volunteer in the classroom must submit a vulnerable sector police check, and current immunization record. Volunteers and students do not have direct unsupervised access to children, and will be supervised by the full time permanent staff within the setting. In addition, volunteers must review and sign all relevant policies and procedures, and must comply with all of them at all times.

Behaviour Management

We believe that behaviour management is an integral part of our program as it complements our goals and philosophy. It ensures the smooth running of our program and teaches children to learn to respect others, themselves and property. Learning to behave appropriately is a lifelong skill that begins in preschool! Discipline should always be viewed as a positive learning experience. If required, children will be given the opportunity to reflect on their actions away from the group (time-out). Adherence to our Behaviour Management Policy by all staff members, students and volunteers is monitored on a continual basis and reviewed and signed annually by each.

Report Cards

Detailed report cards are completed for Junior and Senior Kindergarten students three times each year in December, March and June. Three year olds receive a general progress report twice a year, in December and June. Parents may request an interview with the teacher to discuss their child's progress at any time throughout the year.

School Trips

From time to time staff may plan a field trip away from the program to offer a fun and educational experience for children. At this time, parents will be asked to sign a Field Trip Permission Form which will include the trip location, date, departure and return times, and cost per student. In the event that permission is not obtained for the child to participate in the trip, parents are asked to make alternate arrangements for their child on that day. Children will be supervised by staff and parent volunteers and will be transported by a licensed bus company. All field trips are heavily contingent on enrolment, availability, participation and weather. TMLC reserves the right to change/cancel schedules and programs as it deems necessary.

Smoke Free Ontario Act

Our program and facilities are smoke free environments. Smoking or handling a cigarette is prohibited in and around the building at all times whether or not children are present. All staff, parents, and volunteers must adhere to this policy at all times. Signage is currently visible at all entrances and in the washroom.

Waiting List

In the event that no space is available and a parent wishes to add their name to a waiting list, children on the waiting list will be offered a spot on a first-come, first-serve basis should one become available during the school year. Parents are not charged a fee or deposit for the placement of their child on a waiting list.

V. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Allergies/Anaphylactic Policy/Medical Conditions

It is the parent's responsibility to document on the enrolment form and to inform the teachers of any allergies or medical conditions their child has. If a child is Anaphylactic, parents must complete and sign an Anaphylactic Emergency Plan and provide training to staff. A child who is Anaphylactic will not be permitted on school grounds without an Epipen. Please make sure that Epipens have the expiry date and the child's name clearly visible. Every effort possible will be made to minimize contact with identified allergens. We are a nut free facility.

Cleanliness, Sanitation and Hand Washing

We believe that learning environments for children need to be respectful, clean and well organized. As such, we are committed to ensuring that our equipment and furnishings are maintained in a safe and clean condition and kept in a good state of repair.

In addition to daily cleaning routines (tables, floors) the classroom, toys and materials are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis by the staff. There are detailed checklists that must be completed to ensure that these high standards are being met. The children are also encouraged to participate in tidying and organizing their environment.

Consistent and diligent hand washing is an important way to maintain the health of our children and staff. Educator's model and support children with proper procedures for routine hand washing before and after meals, after the park, after using the washroom and before and after food preparation and handling. It is also strongly recommended that the children wash hands before arriving at school and when they return home.

Immunization

Ontario legislation states that any child attending an educational facility must be immunized unless a fully authorized exemption is on file. If parents choose not to vaccinate their child(ren), written documentation of a religious, conscientious or medical exemption must be provided. For medical exemptions, a written statement from a physician or nurse practitioner stating why the child should not be immunized is required. For all other exemptions, a letter from the parent declaring their religious or conscientious objection is required. Photocopies of exemption letters must be sent to York Region Public Health Immunization Services.

If an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease occurs, children who are not immunized may be excluded from attending the Centre to reduce their risk of getting the disease.

Illness

In the best interest of your child, and the other children and staff at TMLC, children who show visible signs of illness including; severe coughing, constant/severe runny nose or sneezing, fever, diarrhea or vomiting, unusual spots, rashes, itching, or excessive lethargy, should not be at school. Children who are not well enough to fully participate in all aspects and activities (including outdoor play) of a regular school day should not be sent to school.

Children must be symptom free for 24 hours **without medication** before returning to school.

The staff reserves the right to refuse entry to the school if a child appears ill upon arrival. If a child becomes ill during the day, parents will be contacted to pick up the child as soon as possible.

The Public Health Act requires that children do not attend school when suffering from any communicable diseases. The recommended minimum period of exclusion is as follows:

- Chicken pox: 5 days from the onset
- Pink eye: 24-48 hours
- Lice: 24 hours after first application of medicated shampoo treatment
- Strep Throat: 48 hrs. after antibiotics
- Scarlet Fever: 48 hrs. after antibiotics
- Red measles: 7 days from appearance of rash
- German measles: 5 days from appearance of rash

Please notify the staff as soon as possible of any of these as this information may need to be reported to York Region Public Health.

Administering Medication

Only **prescribed** medication will be administered by the Supervisor. Over the counter medications such as cough syrup and Tylenol will not be administered. If your child is sick to the extent that he/she requires such medication, they are deemed too ill to be at school. In order for staff to administer medication, the parent/guardian must complete and sign a medication form.

Emergencies

To ensure that parents are immediately accessible in the case of an emergency, it is essential that contact information be kept up to date at all times. If the parents cannot be reached, the designated emergency contacts will be called.

A child needing emergency medical care will be taken to the nearest available hospital as required. Parents will be notified immediately.

In case of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building, the children will be taken to the Bishop`s Cross Plaza/Eighty 8 Restaurant, next door to the school. TMLC will contact parents from this location.

Fire Safety

As part of our licensing requirements, fire drills are held monthly. The children practice both the regular and alternate evacuation routes. Instructions in case of fire are posted behind our classroom door. Our designated temporary shelter is Bishop`s Cross Plaza/Eighty 8 Restaurant.

School Closure/Storm Policy

If bad weather conditions warrant an early closing time, the school will contact parents and ask for their cooperation in picking up their children. If overnight weather conditions warrant a school closure, every effort will be made to inform the parents via email/text/phone messages. Parents are advised to call the school (416) 347-6084 for recorded message before leaving for school during major snow storms.

Licensing requirements include mandatory functioning phone lines, heat, electricity and running hot water. Should these services be compromised or unavailable, the school will be closed until further notice. Because these cases are beyond the school`s control, no reimbursement of funds will be provided for cancellation of regular programming.

Serious Occurrence Notification Policy

TMLC will post a high-level Serious Occurrence Notification Form when a serious occurrence has happened.

1. Following submission of the Serious Occurrence Initial Notification Report (INR) to the ministry and within 24 hours of becoming aware of an occurrence TMLC will complete a Serious Occurrence Notification Form to communicate information to parents about serious occurrences that have occurred at the Centre.
The exception is in the case of allegations of abuse or unverified complaints which will be posted at the completion of follow-up/investigation.
2. The Serious Occurrence Notification Form will be posted outside our classroom door, near the child care license and Licensing Summary chart.
3. The Serious Occurrence Notification Form is posted for a minimum of 10 business days. If the form is updated with additional information such as additional actions taken by TMLC the form remains posted for 10 days from the date of the update.
4. TMLC will retain the Serious Occurrence Notification Form for at least 2 years from the date of occurrence and make the forms available for current and prospective parents, licensing and municipal children`s services staff upon request (consistent with current requirements for the availability of licensing documentation).
5. For more information please refer to our Serious Occurrence Policy.