

Athena

Montessori

Academy

**Parent
Policy
Handbook**

1503 Morgan Lane, Austin, Texas 78704

512.494.6237

www.AthenaMontessoriAcademy.com

Dear Parents,

We thank you for placing your trust in us to care for, honor, respect, and guide your precious children. We carry out our jobs with the utmost honor and responsibility.

We value your constructive feedback and appreciate any volunteered time and energy you may wish to devote to our efforts towards achieving excellence.

We look forward to getting to know your family and we invite you to be an integral part of our community!

Athena Montessori Academy

Mission Statement

Athena Montessori Academy's mission is to provide a loving, diverse, holistic, educational, and experiential environment for children. We strive to nurture, stimulate, and cultivate healthy minds, bodies, and souls. We aspire to attain this vision through the direction of experienced Montessori guides and through an understanding and practice of healthy, active lifestyles. We seek to provide a rich community environment for the families and extended families of Athena Montessori Academy, offering classes and programs for children and adults alike.

Our Staff

At Athena Montessori Academy, we are staffed by one full-time Owner/Director, an Assistant Director, a Director of Admissions, certified Montessori Guides in every class, experienced and trained assistants, support staff, Early Arrival and After-School Guides, and substitutes. You are welcome to review the backgrounds and qualifications of our staff members on the Meet the Staff page of our website at www.AthenaMontessoriAcademy.com. All staff (including substitutes) must pass criminal background history checks and FBI fingerprints as required by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

Licensing

We are licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Contact our local DFPS office at 834-3195 or <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us> for questions or more information. You can view our most recent licensing report either on the DFPS website or view the one posted in the office on the bulletin board. A copy of the DFPS Minimum Standards is also available for review in our office or on the DFPS website.

Holidays and Vacation Periods

We follow the AISD school calendar from August to June and offer an optional six-week summer camp program a week and a half following the last day of school. We will be closed for Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Winter Break, Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, Spring Break, Memorial Day and 4th of July. In addition, at least two days are scheduled during the school year for parent conferences, and additional days scheduled for staff professional development and teacher work days. School is closed for the children for four weeks following summer camp for repairs, remodels, staff training and preparation. Although Athena Montessori Academy follows the Austin Independent School District (AISD) calendar for school closings, holidays, and staff development days, Athena Montessori Academy reserves the right to alter the calendar in order to meet the needs of the school. Please be sure to get a copy of our school calendar, which is included in your Enrollment Packet, on the website and in the front office.

Waiting List

The waiting list is always open, with priority for enrollment and re-enrollment in open slots to be determined as follows:

- 1) Currently enrolled students.
- 2) Siblings of currently enrolled students with an application on file who exhibit readiness to thrive in the environment per the Guide's assessment.
- 3) Applicants on the waiting list, in order of application received, and according to the need to balance gender, age, temperament and diversity in the classroom.

Tuition Expectations

Please review the tuition and fee sheets and policies included in your Enrollment Agreement and discuss any questions you may have with our administrative team. We do not send monthly bills. You may pay your annual tuition in one lump sum, bi-annually, or monthly, in ten month installments, from August 1 to May 1. Summer camp tuition is due June 1 and July 1. We have locked tuition boxes mounted on each end of campus that are checked twice daily. Please feel free to put your checks or other paperwork in either of these tuition boxes anytime.

Daily Operation

Athena Montessori Academy is open Monday through Friday as follows*:

Early Arrival Program	7:30 – 8:30
Pre-Primary Montessori Half Day	8:15 – 12:15*
Pre-Primary Montessori Full Day (starting at 24 mo) (Includes a nap or rest time)	8:15 – 2:30/2:45*
Primary Montessori Half Day (3-6 years)	8:30/8:45 – 12:30*
Primary Montessori Full Day (3-6 years) (The full day program includes Nap, Creative Day or Extended Montessori Day depending on development and readiness)	8:30 – 2:45/3:00*
After School Program (Athena students only)	3:00 – 6:00

*Drop-off and pick-up times may vary on a staggered basis depending on class to provide ample room for parking for all families. Hours may vary during summer camp.

Extra Curricular Programs

Jump! Gymnastics, offered by Natalie McKee, experienced gymnast and gymnastics coach, with degrees in Psychology and Kinesiology. Starts at age two. Natalie: 496-5867 or Natalie@jumpgymnastics.com. Website: www.JumpGymnastics.com. *This program is included with tuition for Pre-Primary students.*

Creative Dance Adventures, offered by Miss Joan, Director of Creative Movement at Ballet Austin Academy. Starts at age three. Joan Wolfe: 444-3204 or 517-3214 or missjoanw@earthlink.net.

Traditional Martial Arts Academy's Wee Warriors, designed by James Espy, Sa Bum Nim, a 3rd degree black belt teaching Pyon Moo Do. Starts at age three. Mr. Espy: 535-4404 or traditionalmartialarts@hotmail.com. Website: www.TraditionalMartialArtsAcademy.com.

Soccer Shots by Eddie Russ: Call Eddie at 512-217-3520,
Eddie@SoccerShots.org or www.SoccerShots.org.

Love Your Yoga is yoga fun for all ages! To enroll in family, kids and adult classes, please connect with Liz Hudson at 512-785-4897 or email LizBHudson@gmail.com.

These programs are offered in our gym/Community Resource Center. Schedules, registration and tuition are handled directly through each partner. You are welcome to observe and sample any program prior to enrollment, age and space permitting.

Attendance Expectations

Programs are scheduled for five days a week. Regular attendance is of the utmost importance. Please notify the school in the event that your child is ill or unable to attend class. Absenteeism will have no effect on tuition and fees.

If your child is going to be absent from a scheduled school day, we ask that you please call Athena Montessori Academy (512.494.6237) to advise of the child's name, and the reason the child will not be attending school that day.

Drop Off and Pick Up Expectations

Unless your child is participating in the early arrival program, please park in the parking lot off the Ben White access road and drop your child off at school between 8:15 and 8:55 a.m. to your child's teacher. Drop off and pick up times are staggered by class to provide ample parking for all families in the parking lot. Your child's teacher will explain your drop off and pick up times and procedures at Back to School Night and at your Pre-Visit. **We ask that all parents be off campus no later than 9:00 a.m.** Creating a peaceful environment for your children can often be disturbed by late arrivals and unexpected changes to the children's schedules. The Lead Guide for your child's class will outline the policies for late arrival for that classroom at your scheduled Pre-Visit prior to your child's first day of school. The half day pick up window is between 12:15 and 12:30 p.m., and the full day pick up windows are between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m. If you

arrive later than your scheduled pick up time, you will be charged a drop-in rate of \$15 for the extended day or After School. If you arrive later than 6:00 p.m. for the After School Program, please plan to pay the After School Guide directly at the rate of \$1 per minute for every minute later than 6:00 p.m.

Sign-In/Sign-Out

DFPS Licensing requires that each child be signed in and signed out each day. The staff member in charge at drop-off or pick-up will be responsible for signing in and signing out your child every day. It is the responsibility of the person picking up or dropping off the student to connect with the teacher to make sure the child gets signed in or signed out. Because these times of the day can be very busy, it is imperative that you make direct contact with the teacher so that your child's presence or departure can be accounted for.

Authorization to Drop Off or Pick Up a Child

The only people authorized to drop off or pick up a child from Athena Montessori Academy are the child's parents or guardians. If you desire to designate another person to pick up or drop off your child, you must list that person on the child's Enrollment Agreement. If a change in plans does not allow you or a designated person to pick up your child, you must notify the office prior to pick up time. You must also provide the person's first and last name, phone number, and his or her relationship to the child (e.g., grandmother, friend of the family, etc.). This person must bring a valid driver's license or state-issued ID showing their full name and photo.

In case of emergencies, or illness, all parents and guardians will be notified immediately to come pick up their child(ren). All parents and guardians may also feel free to come pick up their child(ren) at any time due to unforeseen events, family or weather emergencies; we appreciate a call ahead of time so we can prepare the child for an early departure.

Health/Illness Policy

Athena Montessori Academy follows DFPS recommendations and Texas Health Department Requirements in case of illness.

A child may not attend Athena Montessori Academy or may be sent home if he or she:

- Has an illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities including outdoor play. If your child is not well enough for outdoor play, you will need to make arrangements to keep your child at home until he or she is fully recuperated and can join the other children.
- Has an illness that results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in our care.
- Has an oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, or an armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or higher, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness in the past 24 hours.
- Has symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores, behavior changes or other signs that the child may be severely ill.
- Has sore or discharging eyes, or yellow/green discharge from the nose or ears.
- Has urinary problems.
- Has head lice and/or nits.
- Has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation confirming that the child is no longer contagious.

Out of concern for the health of all of our children and staff, Athena Montessori Academy unconditionally reserves the right to notify you should any of the above symptoms occur and ask that you pick up your child as soon as possible. We hope that parents and guardians appreciate our call if your child is exhibiting symptoms of illness.

If a communicable disease is reported to the Health Department not only will we notify the parents and guardians immediately, but we will also report it to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Return to School

After your child's illness, he or she may return to school:

- Twenty-four hours after your child's temperature has returned to normal **WITHOUT THE USE OF MEDICATION**.
- Twenty-four hours after antibiotics have been started (including topical ointments).
- When the child has not had diarrhea and/or vomited for at least 24 hours.
- When the child's pediatrician provides a note that the child is well enough to return to school.

Medication Policy

Athena Montessori Academy does not administer medications to children. Any medication must be administered to the child by the parent or guardian before school, during lunch, or at other scheduled breaks.

The only exceptions to the above policy will be in the event of a severe allergy or asthma attack. Under these circumstances, the staff of Athena Montessori Academy will only administer the following type of medication:

1. An inhaler used for severe asthma
2. An EpiPen for severe allergy (such as peanut)

If a child has one of the above-mentioned conditions, we require specific training and instructions on recognition of symptoms and administration of medication from the parents, a record of which will be kept on file. In the event of administration of the above-mentioned medication, parents will be notified immediately. Permission to administer medication must be updated in writing every six months.

Immunizations

We are required by DFPS to keep a copy of each enrolled child's immunization records on file. You can review the Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule included in your enrollment packet, or retrieve one from the Department of Health and Human Services—Center for Disease Control and Prevention, or go to www.immunizetexas.com.

We are also required by DFPS to keep a copy of each enrolled child's hearing and vision results for children four years old or older on September 1. Every February we will provide a nurse at the school to perform hearing and vision screens for your child, with your permission, and for a fee.

Your child's doctor will also have the above information. At the time of enrollment you will be asked to provide to us documentation of immunizations with a doctor's signature, or, if you choose not to immunize your child, you must provide to us the State of Texas Immunization Waiver form (notarized), as well as hearing and vision results (if required). At this time, Tuberculosis testing is not required in this region.

Child Abuse or Neglect

Texas State Law requires the staff of Athena Montessori Academy to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or a law enforcement agency.

The toll free phone number to make confidential reports is 1-800-252-5400.

Failure to report is a Class B criminal offense, punishable by a \$2,000 fine and/or imprisonment for up to 180 days. Failure to report could also subject you to considerable monetary liability in a civil rights action.

Safety Policy

Athena Montessori Academy places a high priority on safety and cleanliness. The school will keep current on all annual health and fire inspections, and will keep an emergency evacuation plan posted in each classroom. We will also have monthly fire drills and periodic severe weather drills.

First aid supplies are kept in each classroom in the school, and all staff members on each shift are trained in Infant-Child CPR and Emergency First Aid. If a minor accident occurs, the school will provide basic first aid for your child.

If there is a more serious event or more extensive treatment is required, the Director, or her qualified appointee, will make all decisions about the care of the child. Athena Montessori Academy will immediately notify the child's parents or guardians (and/or emergency contacts and/or the child's physician, if necessary). We will also call an ambulance or the paramedics if the need arises.

Your responsibility as parents and guardians is to keep Athena Montessori Academy current on all phone numbers, emergency numbers, and other pertinent information.

For any type of accident, the attending staff member or Director of Athena Montessori Academy will fill out an Accident Report (minor accidents) or an Incident Report (more severe accidents), and parents and guardians will receive a copy. A copy will also be kept on file at the school.

If your child required medical attention, a copy of the incident report will be filed with the Department of Family and Protective Services.

Our Designation as a Gang-Free Zone

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This statute requires that we distribute information about gang-free zones to our families. What are gang-free zones and what is their purpose?

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location (in our case, Athena Montessori Academy) where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of our school. Engaging in gang-related criminal activity or organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of our school is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

Food Policy

Lunch

Due to the severe nature of peanut allergies, and the inherent risks to our student body, we have a peanut-free policy. **Please do not send peanuts or any food containing peanuts with your child to school, including snacks or lunches.**

In keeping with Athena Montessori Academy's mission to cultivate and nurture your children's healthy bodies, parents and guardians are asked to send their children to school every day with a nutritiously packed lunch that will not spoil without refrigeration. Please do not send food in cans or frozen meals. The Guides have access to refrigerators and microwaves if they are needed. Also, please note that we have a **"no sugar"** policy at Athena Montessori Academy and we appreciate you enjoying sweets with your child at home.

To help preserve our environment, please attempt to send your child's lunch in reusable containers rather than throw-away containers such as paper or plastic bags. Insulated lunch boxes and bags work well to keep lunches fresh. Please be sure to label your child's lunch box or bag.

The children will eat lunch with their classmates and Guides who will utilize the opportunity to model appropriate table manners and etiquette in addition to discussing good nutrition and health practices.

Snacks

We ask parents/guardians to volunteer to provide snack and fresh flowers on a sign-up basis for one week. You will have the opportunity to sign-up for your week at your pre-visit, or beginning of each semester, and the sign-up sheet will be available in the classroom with the dates that you are responsible for providing the children's snacks. When selecting your snack items, please include at least one option from each category: fruit/veggies, carbohydrates and proteins. On the Friday before your week, we will send home a snack suggestion list for you with options from each category. Please bring the snacks and flowers with you Monday morning with a sufficient amount for your child's class for the week. We ask that you kindly keep our **peanut-free and sugar-free policies** in mind when planning your snack and provide snacks that are fresh and nutritious. Snacks are served in the mornings during work period, as well as in the afternoons during the After School Program. Flowers are used by the children for flower arranging in the classroom.

If you have further questions regarding snacks or allergy restrictions, please don't hesitate to discuss this matter with your child's teacher.

When parents choose to provide the child's meals and/or snacks, Athena Montessori Academy is not responsible for the nutritional value of the food brought from home or for meeting the child's daily food needs.

Food Allergies

Please inform us in writing, on your child's Enrollment Agreement, of any food allergies or sensitivities that your child has. Allergies for each child will be posted in every room and every staff member will be made aware of the child's allergy. It is all of our responsibility to ensure a healthy environment for every child.

Early Arrival Program and After School Program

In addition to our Half Day and Full Day Montessori programs, we provide quality educational care for your children before and after school in our Early Arrival Program (EAP) and After School Program (ASP). Our primary goal is to care for your children in a nurturing, creative, playful, and flexible environment while honoring Montessori philosophy, before and after regular school hours. You may either enroll in the Early Arrival Program or After School Program for use on a daily basis, or call ahead to use on a drop-in basis. We begin accepting children at 7:30 a.m. and provide a calm, engaging morning, both inside and outside in the gym or trike track before school starts. The guides deliver the EAP children to their respective teachers at 8:25.

If you know in advance that you need to drop-in your child to After School on any given day, please fill out the After School Form, kept in your child's classroom, and give it to your child's Guide that morning at drop-off. If you find yourself needing After School during the day, please call the main school number. If you need to leave a message, please know that messages will be checked before each pick-up window. We will get a message to your child's Guide. The \$15 drop-in fee can be paid on the day you drop-in, or included with your next tuition payment. Checks can be placed anytime in either locked tuition box on either end of campus. These lock boxes are checked twice daily. Reminders for any After School fees will be placed in your mail tube or parent folder.

Any child not enrolled in the ASP who is still at school after 3:00 p.m. (or after an Extra-Curricular Program if not picked up) will be signed in to the After School Program. In addition to outdoor and/or indoor play, we will offer activities involving art and self-expression, body movement, reading, puzzles, games and manipulatives. Each afternoon we provide a healthy snack for all the children, which is donated by one family a week. There will be an emergency contact binder and attendance clipboard with the sign-out sheet with one of the ASP guides at all times. We will typically be in the gym or on the big playground and will have a sign on the door letting you know where we are. It is essential that when you come for pick-up that you make contact with that team member before leaving with your child, so that we can make sure your child gets signed out (required by law) and

to ensure that all of our little ones are accounted for and taken care of. Occasionally, on days with inclement weather, we may choose a DVD for the children to watch. We respect each family's decisions on media and we welcome any questions or concerns you may have. We also invite you to share any favorite titles that you feel would be appropriate for the two to six year old range.

Please note that the office phone may not be answered after school. **To reach the After School team after 3:00 please call or text them directly on the After School phone at 512.496.3221.**

Naptime, Creative Day and Extended Day

If your child is enrolled in the Montessori Full Day Program from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., your child's day at Athena Montessori Academy includes a nap or quiet rest time, and your child may need to bring the following items to school in a pillowcase labeled with your child's name: a small pillow, small sheet and/or blanket, and a "lovie" to snuggle (if desired). Your teachers will let you know what you need to bring at your pre-visit. The Pre-Primary students nap in their classroom. The Primary students are divided by age, nap temperament and academic readiness, into either the Nap Program, the Creative Day Program, or the Montessori Extended Day in the classroom. Typically, the three and four year olds sleep or rest in the nap room, and the five and six year olds have an Extended Montessori Day, which includes "Zen" time in the classroom, followed by an additional Montessori work period. We have created a third program in the afternoons to serve those Full Day students who are no longer napping in the Nap Room and who are not quite ready for the Extended Montessori Day in the classroom. The Lead Guides determine which children go to Creative Day, throughout the year and their tenure at Athena, and they move through the three programs (Nap, Creative Day and Extended Day/Zen Time) based on individual need, readiness and development. Two teachers lead the Creative Day Program, which includes storytime, structured art activities and independent indoor and outdoor work time. The children are escorted back to their respective classrooms before pick-up time.

If your child naps at school, we ask that you take your child's nap belongings home each Friday to wash them and return them Monday morning.

Potty Training

Children in the Pre-Primary class will be introduced to the potty from day one. Though children are encouraged towards independence in this area, they are never forced or coerced to use the potty. Children still in diapers will be changed regularly and introduced to the process of using the toilet, including hand-washing. A separate personal cubby will be provided for children still in diapers to store diapers and wipes that we ask you to provide. Should you have more specific questions regarding this process, please don't hesitate to discuss this matter with your child's Guide. Students must be independent with potty and no longer wearing diapers to enter the Primary program.

Clothing

Please send your child(ren) to school in clothing that will help foster independence. Remember that we aim to encourage independence in self-care, so anything that will limit or frustrate your child's independence is discouraged. Please avoid buckles, difficult snaps or "onesies" that will limit their movement or cause distraction.

Your child(ren) will also be engaged in MESSY, hands-on activities (i.e. art and gardening), so we request that you please dress your child for WORK. Learning to drink from an open cup, planting seeds, tending garden, and painting are just a few examples of these types of activities. We also request that you send an extra set of clothing in case we need to assist your child in a change of clothes. Though each child will have a personal space for items, we ask that you **label** all of your child's clothing.

Regarding shoes: flip-flops and hard-soled boots are not safe for the playground and are not ideal for freedom of movement. Keep in mind that we do not interfere in children's exploration of puddles, mud, etc., when selecting footwear. Closed-toe shoes are ideal.

Items to Leave at Home

We kindly request that children leave toys, purses, money, candy, gum, cosmetics and any blankets or pillows that will not fit into their cubbies at home. Should your child bring any of the above items to school, they will be stored in a basket until the end of the day. Toys resembling guns or weapons will be sent back home immediately.

Lost or Damaged Items

Montessori teaches independence and care of one's own belongings. We are not responsible for any lost or damaged personal items. We have Lost and Found boxes in each classroom and in the front house. Labeling items helps in recovery of lost items and we make every effort to return a lost item to its owner. Unlabeled items left for long periods of time will be taken to Goodwill.

Photography

We often take photographs of the children engaging in various activities. These photographs will primarily be used for sharing with parents, or for display in the classrooms, office, in school scrapbooks, and in albums for the children. Occasionally we will use these photographs on our school website, brochures, advertisements or other promotional collateral. You can either authorize or not authorize use of your child's image for promotional purposes for Athena by your signature on your Enrollment Agreement.

Birthdays

In honor of your child's special day we recognize him or her by singing a traditional Montessori song and sharing a Birthday Circle. We encourage you to prepare, with your child, a poster with several photographs highlighting milestones of each of their years of life (i.e. birth, year one, year two, etc.). You are welcome to bring healthy snacks to share, such as muffins or fruit, for the celebration. Please refrain from sending cakes,

cookies, sugary drinks, or favors. In lieu of a snack you are welcome to donate a book to your class in honor of your child's birthday. Parents are encouraged to attend their child's celebration in the classroom.

If you plan to send invitations to school for a birthday party, please ensure that there are enough for the entire class. We will then be happy to put them in student folders/mail tubes.

Field Trips and Transportation

Athena Montessori Academy schedules occasional field trips for the children. On your Enrollment Agreement there is a section where you can indicate your consent for field trips and transportation. Prior to any scheduled field trip every parent and guardian will be notified, given information in writing, and asked to sign a Permission form. As Athena staff is not allowed to transport children (other than their own), parents will be asked to volunteer to act as chaperones and provide the necessary transportation. The Pre-Primary field trips require every child to have a guardian accompany us on the field trip. On the Primary field trips, parents can carpool assigned groups of children and driver lists with phone numbers will be provided to all drivers. Car seats must be provided for all students being transported at any time.

Water Play and Animals

Occasionally and weather permitting, the children will engage in water play such as sprinkler play or water tables. The children will also be responsible for watering their gardens with watering cans. If, in the future, we plan any other water activities such as swimming, each parent and guardian will be notified well in advance and asked to sign and return a Letter of Permission to be placed in your child's file.

Animals, such as caged caterpillars, hamsters, butterflies, cats, tortoises, and fish, are part of the Montessori environment. Children will learn about the natural world through observation and care of these animals. We will ensure that our caregivers and children practice good hygiene and hand washing after handling or coming into contact with an animal and items used by an animal, such as water bowls, food bowls, and cages. Our school cats have complete files with shot records, vaccines, etc.

Parent Visitation Policy

Athena Montessori Academy welcomes parents or guardians to visit their child(ren) at school at any time. In order to minimize disruptions, we ask that you please call ahead and let us know that you are coming for a visit. Visiting with your child on the playground or at lunch is less disruptive than during class. If you would like to formally observe your child's class, please make an appointment with your child's Guides and notify the office upon your arrival. We encourage parents to observe prior to parent conferences to prompt questions and provide a context for better understanding your child's environment.

While observing in the classroom, the Guide will show you where to sit. Please observe quietly without interacting with the children so as not to disturb the lessons and flow for the children. There are copies of our guidelines for observing, entitled Guide to Observing in the Classroom, located in the office.

Parent Conferences

Parent Conferences are scheduled for each family with the child's Guides in the Fall and Spring semesters of each year. We will try to accommodate a parent's or guardian's schedule as much as possible. Two days are reserved for scheduling conferences where there is no school for the children. We schedule as many conferences as is feasible on these days when school is closed and additional conferences will be scheduled during teacher office hours in the afternoons to accommodate every family. We provide childcare during conferences at no charge. These bi-annual conferences are designed for discussions regarding a child's social and emotional development and academic progress at Athena Montessori Academy. You, as a parent or guardian, will gain insight into your child's Montessori experience, and we will also learn more from you about your child. Your teacher will also guide you in your placement decisions for when your child is ready to graduate from Athena.

In addition to the bi-annual conferences, we are always available to meet with a parent or guardian who has a concern he or she would like to address. If you would like to schedule any additional conference(s) with

your child's Guide or the Director, please call in advance to make an appointment during office hours. Please do not try to have an impromptu conference with your child's Guide or the Director when you are dropping off or picking up your child.

At drop-off and pick-up times the Guides are still responsible for all the children and cannot be distracted by a lengthy conversation with a parent. Guides have group lesson plans and activities posted each day in their classrooms and they keep files and notes on every child's individual lessons and progress. You are always welcome to browse this information if you want to know about your child's work on any given day.

Your child's Guide and/or the Director will also make themselves available for a telephone conference if scheduling a face-to-face meeting is too difficult for a parent or guardian's schedule. Every effort will be made to resolve concerns that a parent or guardian might have with Athena Montessori Academy's policies. We appreciate your cooperation regarding scheduling additional conferences.

Family Involvement & Fundraising

We aim to build a tight community of children, staff and families and encourage parent involvement wherever possible. We will host parent nights, open houses, educational workshops and volunteer work days on occasion to educate, share information, show off your child's progress, discuss topics of interest to our community, enjoy gardening or beautifying our environments, and share our varied interests. We welcome suggestions for topics of interest or classes and invite you to share your expertise with us.

Throughout the year we have family events and adult-only events to celebrate our community and raise money for specific goals to enhance our programs, build our scholarship fund and to purchase materials for the classrooms that fall outside the school budget. Your participation in any of the volunteer opportunities or fundraising events is invited and very much appreciated but never required. We understand that budgets and time are precious, and that nights and weekends are special to share quality time with your family and friends.

If you are interested in getting involved in our volunteer parent committee to participate in event planning, fundraising efforts, and staff appreciation please visit the Get Involved section of our website or join our yahoo group by sending an email to the address below:

AthenaVolunteers-Subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Discipline and Guidance Policy

Athena Montessori Academy is devoted to nurturing the spirit of each child. We will never physically discipline your child, nor will we speak to your child in a harsh or negative manner. We follow Dr. Maria Montessori's guidelines for behavior modification. Dr. Montessori never equated goodness with silence and immobility. Self-discipline, she felt, should be acquired gradually through absorption in meaningful work. Behaviorists' studies have shown conclusively that children desire to learn and do not need to be motivated by reward and punishment. If a child misbehaves in a Montessori classroom, the Guide helps him or her to select work which will more fully absorb the child's attention. If a child acts out on the playground or any other environment, the Guide re-directs the behavior to an activity that is more productive, and uses the opportunity to teach problem solving, conflict resolution, emotional expression and mediation skills.

If a child should develop chronic behavioral problems that cannot be resolved using the techniques set forth in our Discipline and Guidance Policy, if we are not meeting the child's needs, or if a child's placement is detrimental to the other children in school, we will schedule a parent conference with you to discuss our process for further conflict-resolution steps (e.g. additional parent conferences, third party professional observation and/or guidance, testing or assessment, temporary removal from school, or ultimately, permanent withdrawal from school). If your child is removed or withdrawn from school under these circumstances, no tuition refunds will be made.

Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapter L, Discipline and Guidance

- Discipline must be:
 - (1) Individualized and consistent for each child;
 - (2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
 - (3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self control.

- A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self esteem, self control, and self direction – which include at least the following:
 - (1) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior.
 - (2) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements.
 - (3) Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
 - (4) Using brief supervised separation or time-out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are PROHIBITED:

- (1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- (2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- (3) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- (4) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- (5) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- (6) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- (7) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- (8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
- (9) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

DFPS requires that the acknowledgment form on this page *must* be signed by each child’s parent or guardian and returned to Athena Montessori Academy, where it will be kept in the child’s school file. This policy is required by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Acknowledgment Form

Discipline and Guidance Policy Acknowledgment

My signature below verifies that I have received and read a copy of Athena Montessori Academy’s Discipline and Guidance Policy (included in this handbook).

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

Parent Policy Handbook Acknowledgment

By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have been provided with an Athena Montessori Academy Parent Policy Handbook, dated June 2011, that I have discussed its contents with the Director, and she has answered or addressed any questions and/or concerns that I have.

I understand that if any policies in this handbook are changed or updated, I will receive written notification of those changes prior to their effective date.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date of Receipt _____

Printed Name of Child Attending
Athena Montessori Academy

This signed page must be turned in and kept on file at Athena Montessori Academy.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mary Ann Torrence and her family for their permission to revive the school name of the Greek Goddess “Athena” (Goddess of Wisdom and the Arts, and the Protectress of Children) for a new generation of Austin families. We hope to honor and carry on the tradition of excellence established by Leo and Mary Ann at the original Athena Montessori School in West Austin, which I attended from 1974 to 1978. Other than the name “Athena”, there is no affiliation with the former school.

*Lisl Friday, Director
Athena Montessori Academy*