



INDEPENDENCE
MONTESSORI ACADEMY
LEARN • GROW • GIVE

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2017-2018

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Introduction

Purpose of This Handbook

To provide service of professional quality to the community, Independence Montessori Academy (IMA) must have sound practices through which these services are most effectively offered. We are providing an outline for our policies and procedures for Parents, Students, and Faculty to adhere to.

Mission Statement

At Independence Montessori, our mission is to cultivate the innate inquisitive nature of each child, to foster their physical, mental, and emotional development, and to provide rich and diverse educational experiences that inspire them, and help them develop the confidence to become mentors, and leaders, and stewards of their environments.

History of Independence Montessori Academy

Three like-minded families who sought a Montessori education for their children in Harnett County, North Carolina, but found a lack of options and opportunity founded Independence Montessori Academy in April of 2015. Each having had experience in previous Montessori schools, as parents and board members, gave them the vision, confidence, and experience needed to create a school that would serve their community. Together we now move forward and begin writing our history, creating a legacy of joyful learning, community, and stewardship.

Philosophy and Core Values of Independence Montessori Academy

Learn -

Each child enters the Montessori environment with innate and boundless curiosity, and a vast love of learning. We know that the best way to learn is by experiencing, by “doing”. Therefore, we inspire that natural curiosity by providing a hands-on, challenging, fun, and developmentally appropriate curriculum, rich with experiences designed to tinder that flame of learning.

Our school culture also values ongoing staff development, and parent engagement/enrichment. We model our love of learning by tending to our own continuing development, inspiring our children to view learning as a lifelong endeavor. We also encourage active engagement with the community through staff and family participation in community events.

Grow -

In the Montessori environment, through experiential learning, children develop mastery over increasingly complex “work” in all areas of their development – physical, mental, and emotional. As they deepen their understanding and application of these skills, they build confidence in themselves, and their abilities. They begin to gain independence as they become more competent, and also grow to understand the value of their inter-dependence with others.

Give -

As they develop, the Montessori students begin to learn to mentor their younger classmates, embodying the ideal of being a positive, caring role model. They quickly learn that both the mentor and the mentee have much to learn and gain from their relationship.

Our focus on environmental sustainability and stewardship gives our school another avenue to emphasize giving. We cultivate a year-round organic garden, and learn many lessons there. The garden provides us with lessons all across the curriculum, from manual dexterity to math, science, art, and love of nature to the character building lessons of teamwork and empathy, as well as the ability to value, grow, and eat nutritious food.

We use environmentally friendly, recycled, and sustainable materials in the classroom as much as possible. We have set a goal to have 100% organic and all natural snacks for the students, with as much as possible grown in our community garden.

Key Philosophical Messages That Make Montessori Unique

- Deep respect for children as individuals
- Multi-age classes allow teachers to develop close and long-term relationships with their students, allow them to know each other's learning style well, and encourage older students to become role models, mentors, and leaders to younger students.
- Integrated curriculum is carefully structured and connects subjects within programs (e.g., history and cultural arts to maximize the opportunity for learning and builds from program to program to progress from concrete to abstract learning).
- Independence is nurtured and leads to children becoming purposeful, motivated, and confident in their own abilities.
- Peace and conflict resolution are taught daily and children learn to be a part of a warm, respectful, and supportive community.
- The child creates, in a very real sense, the adult that is to be, through his/her experiences, interactions, and environments. Character development is a central focus of the AMS Montessori curriculum.*
- Hands-on learning is central to the curriculum in all programs and leads to children being engaged rather than passive with their work.

- The environments are responsibly and carefully prepared with multisensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials to support self-directed learning.
- Teachers and children and teachers and parents work together as a warm and supportive community.
- Self-expression is nurtured in all children. Children experience art, music, poetry, theater, writing, and other forms of creative arts with confidence and passion.

**Montessori in the 21st Century.* The American Montessori Society. 2003.

2017-2018 Tuition Rates

The Nesting Room (Toddler: 2-3 years) 8:30am-3:00pm daily*

	Monthly (12)	Semi-Annual	Annual
5 Day:	\$600	\$3,600	\$7,200
3 Day (M,T,W 8:30am-12pm):	\$455	\$2,730	\$5,460
2 Day (TH, F 8:30am-12pm):	\$390	\$2,340	\$4,680

The Children's House (Preschool/Kindergarten: 3-6 years) 8:30am-3:00pm daily*

	Monthly (10)	Semi-Annual	Annual
5 Day:	\$580	\$2,900	\$5,800
Kindergarten:	\$590	\$2,950	\$5,900

The Thinker's Village (Elementary: Grades 1st-6th) 8:30am-3:00pm daily

	Monthly (10)	Semi-Annual	Annual
1st-3rd Grade:	\$600	\$3,000	\$6,000

2017-2018 Extended Care Rates

Extended Exploration 7:00am-8:30am & 3:00pm-6:00pm daily

Monthly (12- Nesting Room 10-Children's House Thinker's Village)	Semi-Annual	Annual
5 Day 7:00am-8:30am: \$50	\$250	\$500
3 Day 7:00am-8:30am: \$30	\$150	\$300
5 Day 3:00pm-6:00pm: \$185	\$925	\$1,850
3 Day 3:00pm-6:00pm: \$115	\$575	\$1,150
5 Day Morning and Afternoon: \$210	\$1,050	\$2,100
3 Day Morning and Afternoon: \$140	\$700	\$1,400

*Please note that the academic day will run from 8:30am-12:00pm for The Nesting Room and The Children's House. Kindergarten and Thinker's Village run from 8:30am-3:00pm. Children's House and Nesting Room parents who wish to pick up at 12:00 pm may do so.

2017-2018 Tuition Discounts

Maximum of 5% Discount on Tuition only

- 5% Military Discount for Active Duty, Reserve/National Guard Military Families & DOD employees: ID must be provided for verification.
- 5% Sibling Discount: 2 or more children concurrently enrolled at Independence Montessori Academy.
- 5% Volunteer Discount: In order to qualify you must have completed 5 or more hours of volunteer work at the school per month. Volunteer hours will be tracked in the main office. The discount will be applied on the following 1st of the month after the volunteer hours have been completed.

2017-2018 Fees

Registration Fee:

Student Registration Fees are due at the time the Admissions Application is submitted for enrollment or waiting pool. The waiting pool is used throughout the year to place students based on fit for the classroom environment. The Registration Fee is a non-refundable fee. **For returning students**, the Registration Fee is due by March 5th of the preceding year to guarantee the student's slot.

\$75 for all students

Resource Fee:

The Student Resource Fee is due at the time the student is admitted. For returning students, the resource fee is due August 1st, 2017. If the student is placed on a waitlist, the Student Resource Fee is due the 1st day of the month prior to the student's first day of class. This fee is non-refundable, unless the student is ultimately not placed in a classroom due to circumstances on Independence Montessori Academy's behalf. The Resource Fee covers disposable classroom goods, maintenance of school grounds and technology support.

\$185 for all students

Withdrawal Fee:

Students are considered enrolled for 2017 - 2018 school year. Students who withdraw between the first day of the school year –the last day of the school year will be assessed with the withdrawal fee, unless the withdrawal is due to documented military orders or is requested by Independence Montessori Academy's Administration. Notice of withdrawal is required in writing to the Director, 2 weeks prior to withdrawing the student. Regular tuition is due for the complete month in which the withdrawal takes place. Student school records are property of IMA and will not be released until accounts are current.

\$250 per student withdrawn

Tuition Policy

Tuition is due at the 1st of each month, unless the 1st falls on a weekend. Tuition is then due on the first school day following the 1st day of the month. **Tuition is considered late on the 10th of the month, at which time a late fee of \$50 is assessed.** If a student withdraws with a remaining balance, and 3 attempts are made to collect the balance are unsuccessful, the account will be turned into Professional Recovery INC, collections agency, and the responsible parties will be required to pay 15% of the collections fees in

addition to the outstanding balance and any late fees incurred. All student records are property of IMA and will be released once the student's account is paid in full.

Checks are the preferable form of payment. Tuition checks can be dropped in the Tuition Box outside the front office. We do accept all major credit cards with a fee of 2.5%. The fee is charged to IMA by the credit card processing company, and IMA does not make any money off this fee.

School Hours:

The Nesting Room (5 Day): 8:30 am – 3:00 pm
 The Nesting Room (3/2 Day): 8:30 am – 12:00 pm
 The Children's House (5 Day): 8:30 am – 3:00 pm
 Kindergarten: 8:30 am – 3:00 pm
 Elementary: 8:30 am – 3:00 pm
 Extended Exploration: 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm
 Before School: 7:00 am – 8:30 am

As a courtesy to our community of families, we open at 7:00 am daily. Your child is welcome to bring their breakfast to school. Regular Class time for all ages begins promptly at 8:30. The Nesting Room and The Children's House students must be accompanied to their classrooms by a parent and signed in. Elementary students may walk in unaccompanied from the drop-off lane of the parking lot. We ask that parents remain in the parking lot until they see their child enter the building. Dismissal is at 3:00 pm. We ask that parents not enter the building prior to dismissal as that can distract the children from preparing to go home. If you need to pick-up early, please come to the front office for an administrator to retrieve your child from their classroom. Late pick up fee of \$10 is assessed at 3:10pm. For students not enrolled in Extended Exploration, fees apply at \$10/hr.

The school closes daily at 6:00 pm. Please contact the front office if you will be late picking up your child. **An additional fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed for late pick up after 6:00 pm.**

Pick Up Permission

If someone other than a previously designated person is to pick up your child, please provide written notification and let that person know they must provide photo ID at pick-up.

Ground Rules for Uninterrupted Work Periods

The following are guidelines established to enable the partnership of parents and teacher to help develop the students at Independence Montessori Academy. The expectation is that teachers will abide by these guidelines in every way.

The Teacher

The teacher's prime responsibilities are:

To help each child help himself experience success.

To protect the child's right to engage in activities of his choice.

The Child

1. Children may work alone or in spontaneous groups. No one may touch another's work without being invited; therefore, there is no forced sharing.
2. Everyone walks around the work rugs.
3. Line rules for group stories or lessons include sitting quietly with arms and legs folded.
4. Each child hangs his own coat, buttons or zips it, and when leaving is responsible for dressing himself and gathering his belongings.
5. Athletic shoes with ties or classroom slippers help us walk quietly and make us sure-footed.
6. Children serve themselves refreshments and are in charge of cleaning the environment.
- 7. Children are directors of work and teachers are there to serve their needs. They push us; we don't push them.**
8. Children talk quietly and ask for help on a one-to-one basis, not by yelling across the room. They do not interrupt a lesson but wait quietly in close proximity to the teacher until noticed before asking for help or direction.

Parents

1. Please leave toys at home and don't fight with children over leaving them in the car at the school door. Children are grumpy when this happens.
2. Please try to bring happy, relaxed children to school by allowing adequate time and a very slow pace in preparing for school.
3. Talk about ground rules with children in a "positive" manner, and practice talking quietly at home.
4. Encourage the ability to distinguish between appropriate indoor behavior and outdoor behavior. There is a difference.
5. Parent conferences are scheduled twice each year. A parent or teacher may schedule an optional third conference.
6. Please avoid tangible rewards for accomplishments children naturally receive pleasure from.
7. Order is very important to children to give them a sense of security and peace.
- 8. Return folders and teacher communications promptly.**
9. Notify the lead teacher if you have a question or concern. A telephone message can be left with the office.
10. Parents are the child's primary teacher. The faculty and staff at Independence Montessori Academy can love, support, and encourage parents best by setting excellent examples. We must address parents' needs as well as the needs of our children. We must also trust one another and share the goal of providing the best educational environment for children to develop.

Uninterrupted Work Period

As per our accrediting agency, the American Montessori Society, we are to uphold the standard of providing an uninterrupted work time. AMS Standard 3.9 states: *Schools are to allocate and protect large blocks of uninterrupted instructional time to support student learning. Optimal learning takes place during two- to three-hour blocks of time. Schools should make every effort to schedule enrichment programs and transition times to accommodate these blocks.*

The purpose of long, uninterrupted blocks of work time is to allow students to freely select work, eventually becoming absorbed in work that has a particular fascination for them at this point in their development. Interruptions disturb the development of the child's focus, concentration, and opportunity to deeply delve into work. During this uninterrupted work time, teachers also have the opportunity to present lessons to the children, ensuring that lessons are given and work is explored in all areas of the classroom.

Observations in the Classroom

Parents who wish to observe a Montessori classroom at work may do so. Appointments can be arranged through the office. We ask that parents do not visit the classroom before mid-October. This will give students and teachers an opportunity to acclimate before visitors are present.

IMA will observe the following guidelines for uninterrupted work cycles. *Please note that the work cycle begins when the majority of children have arrived.*

Toddlers – The Nesting Room

Drop-off time for The Nesting Room is between 8:30 – 8:45 AM each morning. As your child arrives, please have them wash their hands upon entering the classroom. Jackets and shoes are to be stored in cubbies. Children may wear “quiet shoes” (Crocs, moccasins, or soft soled shoes) in the classroom. Socks are a slip/fall hazard. No “squeaky” shoes are allowed in the classroom, as they are distracting for the children and faculty.

The work cycle begins between 8:45 – 11:45 AM, daily. The children will have once weekly extra-curricular activities including yoga, music, art, or dance scheduled during the work cycle. A portion of the work cycle will include outdoors time in the playground or their garden.

Weather permitting, lunches will be held outdoors at their picnic area. Otherwise, lunches will be held in the classrooms. After lunch, the children will have a short recess and then come in to prepare for nap. All children 4 years old and younger are required to take a nap or have a quiet period.

Pre-Primary – The Children’s House

Drop-off time for The Children’s House is between 8:15 – 8:30 AM each morning. As your child arrives, please have them wash their hands upon entering the classroom. Jackets and shoes are to

be stored in cubbies. Children may wear “quiet shoes” (Crocs, moccasins, or soft soled shoes) in the classroom. Socks are a slip/fall hazard.

The work cycle begins between 8:45 – 11:45 AM, daily. The children will have weekly extra-curricular activities including yoga, music, art, or dance scheduled during the work cycle. A portion of the work cycle will include outdoors time in the playground or their garden.

Weather permitting, lunches will be held outdoors at their picnic area. Otherwise, lunches will be held in the classrooms. After lunch, the children will have a short recess and then come in to prepare for nap. All children 4 years old and younger are required to take a nap or have a quiet period.

Kindergarten – The Children’s House

Children 5 years of age or older are eligible to begin Kindergarten work in the Children’s House. Rather than have a quiet period or nap, Kindergarten begins the second work cycle after lunch recess and ends at 2:45 PM.

Primary – The Thinker’s Village

Drop-off time for The Thinker’s Village is between 8:15 – 8:30 AM each morning. As your child arrives, please have them wash their hands upon entering the classroom. Jackets and shoes are to be stored in cubbies. Children may wear “quiet shoes” (Crocs, moccasins, or soft soled shoes) in the classroom. Socks are a slip/fall hazard.

The work cycle begins between 8:45 – 11:45 AM, daily. A portion of the work cycle will include outdoors time in the playground or their garden.

Weather permitting, lunches will be held outdoors at their picnic area. Otherwise, lunches will be held in the classrooms.

The children will have daily/weekly extra-curricular activities including yoga, music, art, or dance scheduled during the second work cycle. The second work cycle begins after lunch recess and ends at 2:45 PM.

Parents' Voice

What is the Parents' Voice?

Parents' Voice is the forum at Independence Montessori Academy for communication between the school administration and parents of children who attend the school. A parent volunteer from each classroom serves as that classroom's Parents' Voice Representative. The Parents' Voice Representatives meet monthly with IMA's Directress to discuss classroom and school events and issues.

What is the purpose of the Parents' Voice?

The purpose of the Parents' Voice is to uphold the school's mission and to support and enhance the education of the children at Independence Montessori Academy.

The primary goal of the Parents' Voice is to help initiate positive changes on behalf of the school's parents. Working together with the administration, the Parents' Voice group has the opportunity to make Independence Montessori Academy even better and to make our children's school experience the best it can be.

What does a Parents' Voice Representative do?

The Parents' Voice Representative for each classroom is a key contact person ("Room Parent") for matters concerning each classroom as well as the entire school. The Parents' Voice group discusses issues or topics brought up at meetings in order to come up with possible solutions or answers. A Parents' Voice Representative must be accessible (by phone or e-mail, or in person) to other parents and willing to attend a monthly hour-long meeting at school. The monthly meetings are held October through June on a day that is agreed upon by the entire group.

Some topics that have been addressed by Parents' Voice groups in the past include: emergency planning, appropriate snacks, classroom field trips and events, school security, parent education topics, ongoing schools information, teacher appreciation, school-wide community building, parent-teacher communication, and administration-parent communication and concerns.

After each monthly meeting, it is the responsibility of the Parents' Voice Secretary to write up his or her meeting notes and circulates them among all Parents' Voice members for review and approval. Once they have been finalized, each Parents' Voice Representative distributes the notes by e-mail or by hand to each family in their respective classroom. Throughout the school year, the Parents' Voice Representatives will contact their classroom's parents for opinions, suggestions, and ideas. This may also include informal votes on issues, if necessary.

How are Parents' Voice Representatives selected?

The Parents' Voice Representative for each classroom is either self-nominated or identified and asked by classroom teachers and/or the administration. Each Spring, the Parents' Voice determines a President, Vice President, and Secretary ("officers") for the coming fall. Parents' Voice Representatives' officers must have had a child enrolled at Independence Montessori

Academy for at least one full school year. In addition, the selected parents must have time available to fulfill the duties as outlined above.

Parent Volunteers

There are many opportunities for parents to volunteer for their child's classroom and for IMA. Parents can represent the class via Parents' Voice, as chaperones on field trips, by presenting an extracurricular lesson (music, dance, art, language, yoga), by helping arrange classroom socials, and by reading in the classroom.

Field Trips

Students and parents are notified in advance regarding the specifics of field trips along with a permission slip, which must be signed and returned. If the field trip requires admission, IMA will send out an invoice prior to the field trip date. It is the parents responsibility to pay the invoice in order for the child to attend the field trip. IMA pays in one lump sum for admission on field trips. Parents may act as chaperones on field trips. This is a service to Independence Montessori Academy and a responsibility that should be considered carefully. Parents who chaperone must start and finish the trip at school. Childcare must be arranged for siblings unless given prior approval from IMA. The Thinkers Village may go on class field trips that are staffed only by teachers as team building events with parent permission.

Parent Chaperone responsibilities:

- Parents must commit to escorting children from school to the field trip **and** from the field trip back to school. No side trips are permitted. Parent chaperones may not leave the group at the field trip site to return home.
- Parents must be in charge of and aware of the children they are responsible for at all times on the trip.
- Parents must follow the plan and guidelines established by the teachers prior to the trip.
- Parents are discouraged from bringing younger siblings on the field trip. They cannot give their attention fully to the students they are responsible for if they have another child in tow.

Babysitting and Outside Care Conflict of Interest

It is inappropriate for parents to employ Independence Montessori Academy faculty and staff for in-home childcare. This policy is furnished in order to maintain the professional integrity of our school program.

Employees of IMA may not provide babysitting or child care for IMA students at any time.

Employees of IMA must refrain from discussing IMA's students or issues when they are in the company of IMA parents before or after school hours, e.g., birthday parties, sports events, public encounters. **Mini-conferences must not occur away from school.**

Teachers can say, "Please call me during school hours to set up an appointment."

Approach to Discipline

We believe that the people who work with young children on a regular basis must be sensitive, warm, caring, knowledgeable, and interested professionals. They must be able to identify individual

qualities, to design and implement a program and an environment that will be conducive to positive growth in all areas of development. Teachers must offer authentic role models for interactions with others and display a sincere enthusiasm for active learning.

The educational philosophy of Independence Montessori Academy is that real, effective discipline is one that comes from within a person. Developing this inner discipline is one of the objectives of IMA. It is our belief that inner discipline develops in a child through active involvement in self-chosen tasks and the development of self-control. The development of inner discipline in a child is always the goal of a Montessori school. The clear organization of the physical environment; the structure, consistency, and predictability of daily school life; the indirect manner of teaching interpersonal skills through the lessons of "grace and courtesy"; the reliance on peer modeling and coaching channel positive behavior and appreciation and empathy help to limit difficulties.

Children are encouraged to express their feelings and opinions in a non-judgmental atmosphere, and adults use active listening and empathic understanding to help interpret a situation with those involved. The teacher sets the tone for bringing the child into harmony by avoiding harsh words, bribes, and generalizations. As children feel accepted for who they are and what they feel, they develop positive self-esteem. The happier children are with themselves, the more likely they are to reach out and interact cooperatively with others.

It is our belief that if the ground rules are consistently followed and positively reinforced, the necessity of external discipline will be diminished. However, when such external discipline is deemed necessary, the following will be observed without failure.

We have identified a series of escalating negative behaviors: Distraction, Disruption and Destruction. The following procedures are put in place for when students display these behaviors:

Distraction:

1. Suggest alternative activities.
2. Persistent distracting of peers in a group setting may be dealt with by temporary removal from the group, but remain in the classroom. Behavioral expectations are made very clear and the child is asked if he/she is ready to return to the group.

Disruption:

3. Persistent disruption to peers in the classroom will result in taking a break from the work cycle in the front office. We will talk with the child who constantly seems to be in need of discipline; explore ways of making life more pleasant. **Problem-solving skills** are reinforced as well as suggestions for alternative behavior choices.

4. Teach the child that emotions are real and valid, and how to deal with them in constructive ways with kind words rather than physical responses. Once the child has calmed

down, he/she will be asked if he/she is ready to return to class in a calm manner. These occurrences may be documented in a Behavior Log that will be sent home with the student.

5. If the disruptive behavior is constant throughout the day, the students parents may be notified to come pick up their child.

6. If the behavior persists and is disrupting the environment on a consistent basis, parents will be notified and a meeting with the Director, Teacher and Childcare Consultant will commence.. The Director and Child Development Consultant will be notified of persistent, inappropriate behavior and will make recommendations to the parents in regards to outside referrals and additional behavior management programs.

Destruction:

7. If the student is destructive to materials*, peers, teachers, staff, or him/herself, they will immediately be removed from the environment and brought to a safe space in the front office.

8. The student's parents will be notified of the destructive behavior and the student must leave the school premises. A Behavior Log will be completed and signed by the student's parents.

9. If the destructive behavior persists, parents will be notified and a meeting with the student's Teacher, the Director and Child Development Consultant will commence with all appropriate documentation of observed behaviors. The goal of this meeting is to come up with a plan for the student in order to help them progress in the environment. The Director and Child Development Consultant will likely make recommendations to the parents in regards to outside referrals and additional behavior management programs. The plan will be put into place and closely monitored with open communication between the student's teacher, the Director and the parents.

10. After the plan has been put into place for the agreed upon time and no progress has been observed, The Director and Child Development Consultant will make suggestions regarding alternative schools that may better meet the needs of the child, as necessary.

*If materials are broken by a student during a behavioral outburst. The parents will be asked to replace the material. IMA will send an invoice which must be paid within 30 days of receipt, along with the web link to the replacement material ordered.

Under no circumstances shall any child be subjected to corporal punishment in any manner upon the body or to verbal abuse.

Policy for Professional Evaluation of a Child

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children who frequently exhibit behaviors that interfere with their ability to benefit from and appropriately participate in classroom activities are identified and considered for possible professional evaluation, program modification, and for continued enrollment at Independence Montessori Academy.

If a Teacher notes a behavior or behaviors that indicate developmental, cognitive, or psychological challenges, or observes behaviors that significantly disturb classroom functioning and peer interaction, she will report these to the Directress.

The Directress will observe in the classroom and in other situations of concern. Both the Teacher and Directress will document examples of the behavior they observe that are concerning. A time frame will be set for observation and documentation, to determine if the behaviors are situational (parent recently deployed, new sibling born, etc.)

After the observation period is complete, a request with an outside professional may be requested to observe and report on classroom interactions and to recommend a course of action to ameliorate a perceived classroom problem. Parent consent is not required for classroom observations, provided the consultant does not directly interact with the child.

The Academy will contact the parents and together will set goals and strategies for change within the student's classroom experience. Support for these strategies from parents at home will also be discussed.

- a. If the child's behavior endangers the welfare of the child or children in their class, or staff members, a referral to an appropriate professional may be requested in a conference with the parents.
- b. An acceptable time table will be set for regular review of the child's progress toward the outlined goals and of the implementation of agreed upon strategies at school and at home.
- c. The child may be present at any meetings, if deemed appropriate. Parents should be assured that we wish to keep all children enrolled at Independence Montessori Academy, if possible. We are committed to working with parents and outside professional support to facilitate the child's progress.

Teachers need to be aware of a child's participation in treatment with an outside professional. Teachers may wish to contact the professional treating a child for information regarding management of specific problems in the classroom. Release forms must be signed by a parent before any such exchange of information can take place.

Independence Montessori Academy reserves the right to request a child's withdrawal from school if his/her problem behaviors adversely affect classmates and/or staff, and/or if the parents refuse to work in cooperation with the Academy regarding recommendations and goals for the child.

Bringing any weapon or dangerous materials to school, or threatening to harm faculty, staff, or classmates is strictly prohibited. Violations of these prohibitions will result in immediate suspension and a meeting between The Founders, Directress, Teacher, Parents and Child, with possible termination of the Child's enrollment by the school.

With Toddlers

Living peacefully with others is an overwhelming challenge for toddlers when their strongest and most impulsive language is through their bodies and not their words. Cognitively, motor messages override verbal messages at this developmental age. Even when words do come, sometimes they do not accurately or effectively express what the child is trying to say.

Toddlers expend enormous amounts of energy getting their bodies to do what they want them to do and to go where they want them to go. Frustration can precipitate tears or whining and even biting, pushing, or pinching. Though not acceptable behaviors, these responses are effective toddler ways of communicating frustration. Thankfully, most toddlers do usually develop acceptable ways of venting these feelings as they become more comfortable in the environment.

For minor, nonchalant misbehaviors, gentle redirection toward work, which will re-engage the interest of the student, is often all that is necessary.

For recurring, minor misbehaviors, a teacher may temporarily limit the child's choice of workspace and/or quietly state the impact of such behavior on class materials or on other children's feelings. We help the child use language to describe what s/he needs or wants.

When a toddler persists in aggressive behavior, the adult stays by the child's side until the child has calmed and can refocus his/her attention positively. During periods of unacceptable behavior, teachers continue to interact with the child, using gentle, positive support and clear, simple language. 1. Teachers may meet with parents to share concerns and discuss ways to replace the aggression with positive coping mechanisms. 2. Teachers must also inform the Education Director and Child Development Consultant of concerns and decide together an appropriate course of action, if follow-up is needed.

Independence Montessori Academy Biting-Incident Policy

Biting incidents are taken very seriously in our school and though we understand biting by a toddler to mean something different from a bite by an older child, the response we use in both age groups is the same.

Toddlers and Early Childhood Students

Biting often results from frustrated, inadequate communication and/or lack of impulse control—two developmental tasks that toddlers, and even some older children are intensely engaged in. Toddlers are in the process of mastering language and often lack the words to fully express their needs, feelings, and thoughts. In the absence of words, toddlers employ their bodies; they push, grab, scratch, and sometimes bite. A bite by an older child is more unusual, but usually still stems from the inability of a child to be successful when using words to resolve a conflict.

Because impulse control is still being developed in young children, there can be a lag between what a young child wants immediately and learning to be calm and wait for something. Often giving words to children who have bitten once or teaching them to take turns will help with the behavior and typically there will not be another bite. It is not unusual however, for a toddler to bite once or twice.

When a child bites another child at Independence Montessori Academy, our policy is that both sets of parents are called and informed of the incident without using the other child's name. The parents of the child who has bitten are given some advice by the classroom teaching team that speaks to the developmental tasks discussed above.

Right after the biting incident, the child who has bitten is told that biting hurts, and that biting is not allowed. The child is asked to use her/his words to resolve conflict and express feelings, not her/his teeth. The child is then encouraged to participate in repairing the bite. This means attending to the hurt child by giving the hurt child an ice pack after the wound is washed with soap and water.

The hurt child is usually calmed by one of the other teachers who administers first aid and attends

to the child until s/he feels okay. The hurt child is also told that the teachers will be very careful so that the child will not get hurt again. The biting child is then "shadowed" in the classroom by a teacher, given a lot of guidance and language and is watched for other biting attempts or impulsive behavior. After both children are calm and feel more comfortable an incident report is written by the teachers and placed in both children's files.

If the biting behavior continues, **and this means after two bites**, a meeting is then set up between the Directress and the parents of the child who is biting. **Every subsequent bite after the second bite occurs, the parents are called by the administration to pick up their child. The Director is immediately informed of the biting incident and places a call to the parents. The Director will schedule another meeting with the parents and sometimes may suggest that the parents consider having their child evaluated for oral/motor sensory therapy and/or play therapy.**

If the above procedures are not successful, the Director will discuss other alternatives with the parents, including the option of the child taking a break from school.

Child Care Procedures

Student Recordkeeping

All confidential student records, including incident and behavioral reports and notes to and from the teachers, are kept in the front office. Your child's safety and welfare is of the utmost importance. Please do not send confidential information: notes regarding family health issues, financial information, etc. to school in a backpack or diaper bag. Please hand written correspondence directly to the Directress or Lead teacher.

Birthdays at School

The school keeps a record of each child's birthday and celebrates each in a special manner called *Celebration of Life*. Pictures of students from birth to present are an excellent lesson in history that is personal and fun. Your child may share these at circle time. Please consult with the student's teachers for planning and suggestions.

Cupcakes or cookies are allowed if there are no allergies in the classroom. Please consult with your child's teacher to assure that cupcakes brought for sharing are appropriate for all classmates. Balloons, party favors, candy, etc. are not permitted.

Library Birthday Book Program

We invite our families to participate in our **Independence Montessori Academy Birthday Book Program**. The birthday child is given an opportunity to select a book and present it to the school; the book is placed in his/her class library with a nameplate in the child's name. This is a fun way to honor children as well as provide books and resources for our library collection.

Cultural Celebrations

Independence Montessori Academy is a non-parochial school. We are proud of the fact that people of different cultures and religions place their children within our school. This requires our sensitivity

to deep religious feelings especially in late December and in the spring. Religious holidays are presented as cultural celebrations that enrich all of our lives.

Keeping in mind these ideals, our guidelines for holiday celebrations:

1. Present religious events and celebrations from a historical and cultural perspective.
2. If several celebrations occur near each other in time or season it is appropriate to deal with all. The themes should be cultural and historical and not religious.
3. Not include any type of prayer or any words that can be interpreted as a prayer.
4. The religious holidays in late December are referred to as “Winter Holidays” or “Semester Break” and the spring as “Spring Break”
5. Do not refer to gifts as Christmas or Hanukkah gifts.
6. Keep in mind; Native Americans do not like to see children dress as “Indians.” Headdresses, feathers, paper bag vests, etc. do not depict a message Native Americans prefer. Please refrain from cultural appropriation.
8. Cultural Celebrations plans are to be presented to the Directress and faculty members in writing or verbally during monthly faculty meetings.

Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma Policy

Belief statement

We, Independence Montessori Academy, believe that preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma (SBS/AHT) is an important function of keeping children safe, protecting their healthy development, providing quality child care, and educating families.

Background

SBS/AHT is the name given to a form of physical child abuse that occurs when an infant or small child is violently shaken and/or there is trauma to the head. Shaking may last only a few seconds but can result in severe injury or even death¹. According to North Carolina Child Care Rule (child care centers, 10A NCAC 09 .0608, family child care homes, 10A NCAC 09 .1726), each child care facility licensed to care for children up to five years of age shall develop and adopt a policy to prevent SBS/AHT².

Procedure/Practice

Recognizing:

- Children are observed for signs of abusive head trauma including irritability and/or high pitched crying, difficulty staying awake/lethargy or loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing, inability to lift the head, seizures, lack of appetite, vomiting, bruises, poor feeding/sucking, no smiling or vocalization, inability of the eyes to track and/or decreased muscle tone. Bruises may be found on the upper arms, rib cage, or head resulting from gripping or from hitting the head.

Responding to:

- If SBS/ABT is suspected, staff will³:
 - Call 911 immediately upon suspecting SBS/AHT and inform the director. o Call the parents/guardians.
 - If the child has stopped breathing, trained staff will begin pediatric CPR⁴.

Reporting:

- Instances of suspected child maltreatment in child care are reported to Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) by calling 1-800-859-0829 or by emailing webmasterdcd@dhhs.nc.gov.
- Instances of suspected child maltreatment in the home are reported to the county Department of Social Services. Phone number: 910-814-6657
- **Prevention strategies to assist staff* in coping with a crying, fussing, or distraught child**
Staff first determine if the child has any physical needs such as being hungry, tired, sick, or in need of a diaper change. If no physical need is identified, staff will attempt one or more of the following strategies:
 - Rock the child, hold the child close, or walk with the child.
 - Stand up, hold the child close, and repeatedly bend knees.
 - Sing or talk to the child in a soothing voice.
 - Gently rub or stroke the child's back, chest, or tummy.
 - Offer a pacifier or try to distract the child with a rattle or toy.
 - Take the child for a ride in a stroller.
 - Turn on music or white noise.

In addition, the facility:

- Allows for staff who feel they may lose control to have a short, but relatively immediate break away from the children.
- Provides support when parents/guardians are trying to calm a crying child and encourage parents to take a calming break if needed.

Behaviors that are prohibited include (but are not limited to):

- shaking or jerking a child
- tossing a child into the air or into a crib, chair, or car seat
- pushing a child into walls, doors, or furniture

Strategies to assist staff members understand how to care for infants

Staff reviews and discusses:

- The five goals and developmental indicators in the 2013 North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development, ncchildcare.nc.gov/PDF_forms/NC_Foundations.pdf
- How to Care for Infants and Toddlers in Groups, the National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, www.zerotothree.org/resources/77-how-to-care-for-infants-and-toddlers-in-groups
- Including Relationship-Based Care Practices in Infant-Toddler Care: Implications for Practice and Policy, the Network of Infant/Toddler Researchers, pages 7-9, www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nitr_inquire_may_2016_070616_b508compliant.pdf

Strategies to ensure staff members understand the brain development of children up to five years of age

All staff take training on SBS/AHT within first two weeks of employment. Training includes recognizing, responding to, and reporting child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment as well as the brain development of children up to five years of age. Staff review and discuss:

- Brain Development from Birth video, the National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, www.zerotothree.org/resources/156-brain-wonders-nurturing-healthy-brain-development-from-birth
- The Science of Early Childhood Development, Center on the Developing Child, developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-ecd/Resources

Resources

Parent web resources

- The American Academy of Pediatrics: www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Abusive-Head-Trauma-Shaken-Baby-Syndrome.aspx

- The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome: <http://dontshake.org/family-resources>
- The Period of Purple Crying: <http://purplecrying.info/>

Facility web resources

- Caring for Our Children, Standard 3.4.4.3 Preventing and Identifying Shaken Baby Syndrome/ Abusive Head Trauma, [http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView.cfm?StdNum=3.4.4.3&="+](http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView.cfm?StdNum=3.4.4.3&=)
- Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/trprev/Preventing_SBS_508-a.pdf
- Early Development & Well-Being, Zero to Three, www.zerotothree.org/early-development

References

Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma Policy

1. The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, www.dontshake.org
 2. NC DCDEE, ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_ccrulespublic.asp
 3. Shaken baby syndrome, the Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/shaken-baby-syndrome/basics/symptoms/con-20034461
 4. Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED, American Red Cross, www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240175_Pediatric_ready_reference.pdf
 5. Calming Techniques for a Crying Baby, Children's Hospital Colorado, www.childrenscolorado.org/conditions-and-advice/calm-a-crying-baby/calming-techniques
 6. Caring for Our Children, Standard 1.7.0.5: Stress <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/1.7.0.5>
- Application This policy applies to children up to five years of age and their families, operators, early educators, substitute providers, and uncompensated providers. Communication Staff*

Children's Safety Policies

Emergency Contact Protocol

In the event of illness or incident involving a student, where the parent must be contacted but cannot be reached, we will give three phone calls in a period of an hour, then move on to the emergency contacts. If it is a medical emergency, all points of contact will be attempted immediately.

Arrival/Dismissal Policies as They Relate to Parents

Our concerns for the children's safety, both physical and emotional, require that once the child has been released to the parent's care, the child is still not permitted to run in the hallways or roam the building and grounds unattended.

Parents who spend a little time in their child's classroom need also to remember that while their child is in her/his classroom, class rules that encourage appropriate behavior still apply for both adult and child. Gently remind adults:

- To use quiet voices
- To walk easily and quietly in the class
- Not to enter a room with sleeping children
- To respect a child's concentration on an activity and not distract him/her at work
- To hold conversation to a minimum and not engage in a spontaneous parent conference at the door during arrival/dismissal

Parents visiting in classes may have an anxious effect on other children settling in for the morning or waiting for their parents at day's end, so please give a gentle cue if it is time for visiting parents to leave. Decorum in voice and demeanor is necessary at all times.

Safety at the Garden or Playground

Children need one hour of physical activity, either inside or outside, for every 2-3 hours of quiet work. Physical activity is considered part of the Montessori curriculum; purposeful activity in the garden or playground is structured, closely supervised and, in some cases, led by the adults.

No throwing of equipment is to be permitted, unless it is a safely played game of ball.

The level of child voices needs to be consistent with where they are (classroom/quiet, gym/louder, park/loudest). Screaming is not permitted. Staff should walk over to children to speak with them and avoid raising their voices in the playground or garden.

Children should wear sneakers or rubber-soled shoes, not jellies, flip-flops or sandals, for these are dangerous in the garden and outdoor situations.

If your child has an allergy to plants, insects, animals, or food make a note of it in their admissions packet and make sure their teachers and administrators are aware of the severity of the allergy and required treatment for exposures. Children will be allowed on supervised outings into our gardens where they may come into contact with insects and plants. Make sure children are aware of their own allergies.

Health Policies

Teachers are responsible for seeing that obviously ill children are not admitted to school for that day.

Each classroom is responsible for awareness of any drug, food, or insect allergies of children under their care. Parents are responsible for updating children's health records to that effect.

Smoking is prohibited on any and all school locations, inside and outside.

All medicines must be kept in the classroom in a locked backpack. Please come to the office with any new medication. Any time medication is administered it must be documented in the child's file. We may not dispense non-prescription medicines to any children that do not include written instructions from a doctor.

Head Lice

Students with lice and/or nits will be sent home and may not return to school without a doctor's note and are nit free. Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Medical Accident Procedures

For Children's Care

In case of child injury, basic first aid will be applied. In the event of a serious injury, a parent will be notified. If the parents are not available, the emergency numbers on the child's emergency card will be called. If these person(s) cannot be reached, the school's pediatrician(s) may be called for medical direction and/or the child taken to the hospital ER.

For minor scrapes/bruises ("boo-boos"): We will wash off the area with soap and water, put on a Band-Aid if appropriate, and fill out an accident report stating what happened so that parent(s) can receive it at pick-up time. If another adult is picking up, call the parent(s) at work that day, or at home that evening.

For bites: check to see whether skin was broken. Quickly wash off the area with soap and water if unbroken skin; fill out form stating what happened so that parent(s) can receive it at pick-up time and advise them to confirm that their child's tetanus immunization has been administered. Call parents to notify. Also inform office.

For sick child (fever of 101.0°, three diarrheas, one incident of vomiting, unexplained rash, or child complains of ills): We will call the parent(s) immediately, explain the problem, and tell them to come and pick up their child. Until a parent arrives, the sick child shall be placed on a cot in an isolated area; decide what's manageable for the child. Consider calling 911 if the temperature is over 104 and is accompanied by additional symptoms (trembling limbs, eyes glazed, etc). Students may not be readmitted to school until 24 hours free of fever, vomiting, diarrhea or rash.

Serious wounds (bump on the head, loosening of teeth): We will apply ice to the area, call the parent(s) immediately, and explain what happened. Describe the nature of the wound and tell them to come pick up their child immediately.

On the day of the incident, teachers must fill out an accident/illness form for all accidents/illnesses. All signed and completed accident reports must be kept on file in the accident report binder in the school office.

Abuse & Neglect

As childcare providers, we are legally bound to report any suspected abuse or neglect. Before reporting any suspected inappropriate activity, we will gather all necessary information and assess the situation. We will then act accordingly in the best interest of the child.

INDEPENDENCE MONTESSORI ACADEMY EMERGENCY PLAN

Emergency Phone Numbers

If an emergency requires calling for an ambulance, Police, and/or Fire Department, the following procedures should be followed:

- **Ambulance services: 911**

- **Police: 911**
- **Fire: 911**
- **Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222,**
- **For all area-wide emergencies, listen to the radio for instructions from emergency personnel.**

NEAREST HOSPITAL: *Womack Army Medical Center, Fort Bragg*
Central Carolina Hospital, Sanford, NC

Annual Inspection

The Directress and her designees will undertake a physical survey of the facilities and grounds for identification and correction of potential hazards. This inspection will occur during the summer of each year. We are licensed by the State of North Carolina and subject to Fire, Sanitation, Safety, Child Development, and

Classroom Disaster Kits

Daily Emergency Packs Contain:

- Small packages Kleenex in ziplock bag
- Pen and small memo pad in ziplock bag
- Box of bandages of assorted sizes
- Latex gloves (several pairs) in a ziplock bag
- Emergency First Aid booklets (Teachers all have from first-aid training)
- Waterless soap
- Antiseptic cream
- Wet wipes
- Laminated Class Roster with Allergies and Parents' Emergency Numbers
- EpiPen if child or adult has a prescription

Emergency Backpacks (1 per Classroom/Office):

- 2 Fleece Blankets
- 1 Wind-up Flashlight
- Baby wipes in ziplock bags
- 2 Diapers for Each Child (Nesting Room only)
- 2 Orange Safety Vests (for teachers to wear)
- Small Safety Scissors

Portable Disaster File

A portable disaster file, containing student emergency contacts and other disaster information, will be maintained in the School Office and there will be duplicates in each classroom's disaster kits. The Office Staff will remove the office file box whenever the building is evacuated.

Disaster Supplies

Disaster supplies projected to last for 12 hours, including food, first aid, blankets, and tools, will be kept in a supply closet. Some of these supplies will be stored in the classroom disaster kits.

Training and Drills

We all hope to avoid any emergency situations throughout the school year but in the event that an emergency situation arises we will be prepared to keep our children safe. In accordance with State law, fire drills are conducted monthly. Tornado drills will be held annually, in the spring. Building evacuation drills to our Safe Haven are conducted at least annually. All students and staff are required to participate in these mandated drills. The Office Staff will maintain a record of these drills.

INDEPENDENCE MONTESSORI ACADEMY'S RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

(In all situations, listen to the radio for instructions from emergency personnel.)

Fire

Evacuate to meeting place at *PARKING LOT*.

- Evacuate building and take roll.
- Close all doors and windows to rooms when evacuating.
- If smoke deepens, stay low to the ground.
- When approaching a closed door, feel with back of hand before opening; feel temperature along crack between door and floor or frame.
- Shut down HVAC system (air conditioners and fans).
- Approval must be received from fire officials before reentering building.

Fire Safety Tips

- ◆ Each teacher should know at every moment where each child in his/her group is.
- ◆ Safe, orderly leaving is to be observed; there is much danger in running.
- ◆ Keep calm. Never try to hide. If the room is smoky, crawl along the floor.
- ◆ Feel the doors. If they are warm, do not open them.
- ◆ If your clothes catch on fire, **stop, drop** to the ground, **and roll** around to smother the flames.
- ◆ Follow the procedures posted in each room.
- ◆ Never block doors or exits with furniture, strollers, or toys.

Armed Intruder/Threatening Individual Lock Down, Shelter in Place

- Summon students and employees into lockable classrooms and offices.
- Take care not to lock out students or employees still in hallways or bathrooms.
- Lock doors to classrooms and offices.
- Cover glass on interior classroom or office doors.
- Turn off lights.
- Sit on floor away from windows and remain quiet.
- Deactivate bell and fire alarm systems (if possible).
- Keep other students and employees away from building.
- Lock exterior doors.
- Do not leave a secured classroom, office, or building without approval from the police or Executive Director.
- Do not attempt to confront or subdue intruder.

Bomb Scare - Evacuate

- Evacuate building and go to our Safe Haven.
- Turn off cell phones and walkie-talkies.
- Do NOT touch thermostats and light switches.
- Deactivate bells and fire alarm systems.
- Do not use PA system or battery-powered megaphones.
- Approval must be received from Police or Fire officials before reentering building.

Dismissal of Children Policy

SHELTERING IN PLACE: Should we need to 'shelter in place' or 'lock down,' no parents will be allowed in or out of the building until we receive advisement from the Emergency Services/Harnett County Sheriff's Department.

PARENT NOTIFICATION: If possible, parents will be notified by e-mail and we will leave a message on the answering machine in the school office. Teachers will use their classroom lists to make calls by cellular phone should there not be enough time to notify parents by e-mail or change the message on the answering machine. If cellular phones are inoperable, the children will remain with their teachers at the Safe Haven until a parent or approved adult arrives to retrieve them.

NOTE: Whether we are in our Safe Haven or in our building, we will ONLY release children to those whose names are on the approved pick-up lists provided by the parents.

Tornado

Lock Down – Shelter in Place

- Call all students and employees into buildings.
- Shut down gas, water, and electrical service (time and safety permitting).
- Seek shelter in classrooms, away from windows.
- If time is short, seek shelter in an interior room with few windows or in a hallway, close all doors to room or hallway, and try to get as many walls between people and the outside as possible.

- Avoid corners of rooms.
- If possible, take cover under a heavy piece of furniture.
- Use hands and arms to protect head and neck.
- If outside and unable to reach shelter indoors, lie flat, ideally in a ditch or depression.
- Do not restore gas, water, or electricity to tornado-damaged buildings without approval of utility company officials.
- Check for hazardous materials spills in damaged buildings.
- Approval must be received from Fire Department officials and the Executive Director before entering damaged buildings

School-to-Home Communications

Monthly Classroom Updates

Classroom teachers or Parents' Voices will provide a monthly activities email to parents by e-mail or by letter hanging on your students hook. These indicate the group activities that occurred in previous weeks. It is a summary of the group's activities for the month. Each classroom has a private Facebook group for parents, teachers, and administrators to connect and share photos and information. They do not include individual lessons given to each child by the teachers.

School-Wide Newsletter

The Directress and Administrators produce a whole-school newsletter. School wide newsletters will be sent out within the first week of every month and any updated/new information will be sent out as needed. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter please sign up in the front office and submit your information by the 1st of the month prior to the newsletter publication.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Teachers hold two required Parent/Teacher conferences per school year in November and May. Parents are free to schedule a meeting with teachers any time that they want to discuss their child or the classroom.

E-mails

Each Lead Teacher has a school e-mail address. Parents are encouraged to send e-mails concerning classroom questions; these will be responded to within 24 hours. E-mails are not confidential or necessarily confidential. E-mails do not take the place of face-to-face communications. Teachers plan a time to check their e-mails once per day. All parent e-mails must be in the classroom's address book on the Independence Montessori Academy Mail System prior to the start of school.

Telephone Calls to Parents

Teachers will call parents whenever they have a concern about a child. Parents can call the school office to request a call back from a teacher. Teachers will return the telephone call within the same day if it is received by 2:30 PM.

Grievances

Parent Grievances

The procedure for consideration and adjustment of grievances of any parent shall be as follows. **The parent will consult with the child's Teacher first.** Failing to reach settlement in conference with the Teacher, the parent will consult with the Director of the School. The Director will consult with the Child Development Consultant, as necessary, and help mediate a meeting between the Parent and Teacher.

Important Dates to Remember:

March 12th– 16th – Open Registration for 18-19 school year for returning students

March 19th – 21st – Open Registration for waiting pool

March 22nd - Registration open to the public

August 1st – Resource Fees Due



I have read the Student and Parent Handbook and agree to abide by its policies and procedures without exception.

Parent/ Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____