



Parent Handbook

Teaching children HOW to learn, not WHAT to learn

“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.” Maria Montessori

Welcome Statement

Elements Montessori is a privately-owned Montessori school for children ages one to twelve years of age. We are located in Spring, Texas, nestled within the community, surrounded by single family homes and nature. Our philosophy is simple: we teach children HOW to learn not WHAT to learn. Our team of Montessori certified teachers, caregivers and professional educators take the proven Montessori methods, experience and formal education and work with each child individually to develop life skills, engage creativity and master the concepts of math, language, science and social play. Guiding principles of Respect, Collaboration, and Growth are considered in all we do. We are excited and thankful that you have trusted us with your child. It is truly a gift to be able to share the Montessori philosophy with you and your child, and each of our educators and team members will work to ensure your child is safe, loved, and inspired every day. Welcome!

Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers

Elements Montessori is licensed to operate by the TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES and must follow ***The Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers (“Minimum Standards”)***.

Minimum Standards are developed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) with the assistance of child-care operations, parents, lawyers, doctors, and other experts in a variety of fields. The child-care licensing law sets guidelines for what must be included in the standards. The Administrative Procedure and Texas Register Act require that proposed standards be published for public comment before they are adopted as rules. The department considers recommendations from interested persons or groups in formulating the final draft, which is filed as rules with the Secretary of State. Standards are a product of contributions from many people and groups and thus reflect what the citizens of Texas consider reasonable and minimum.

Minimum Standards requires the following information for your review at any time:

1. copy of the most recent licensing visit
2. copy of the most recent fire inspection, health department report and gas inspection.
3. copy of emergency preparedness plan.

To contact the local licensing office, please call toll free 1-800-862-5252 or visit the web site at www.tdprs.state.tx.us. To contact PRS child abuse hotline, please call 1-800-252-5400.

Gang Free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Enrollment Procedures

Prior to admission, an enrollment packet must be completed and on file with us. A copy of the enrollment forms will remain within our files for the duration of the child's enrollment at the facility. The forms are available for inspection by the parent or guardian at any time.

The parent or guardian is required by *Minimum Standards* to update information furnished herein as necessary, with changes initialed and dated by the parent and the Director (or designee) or by using the appropriate school form or the designated parent portal. Contact information (addresses and phone numbers for the parents, persons authorized to release the child to, persons authorized to contact in case of an emergency, and the child's physician) is vital information and needs to be updated by the parents or guardians when changes occur.

Tuition and Fees

Our tuition and payment policies can be found in the **Enrollment Agreement** you signed when you enrolled. It spells out the terms and conditions of enrollment, and payment policies. It is the parent's responsibility to pay tuition on time and in full. We will not provide monthly statements unless requested.

Tuition is non-refundable and is DUE WHETHER YOUR CHILD ATTENDS OR NOT - there are no provisions for "make-up" days due to absences, illnesses, or days missed due to inclement weather or other planned or unplanned closures, Holidays or extended vacations.

A non-refundable one-time Application Fee and a non-refundable and annually recurring Registration/Supply Fee will be due upon enrollment (possibly prorated based on the date of enrollment). The annually recurring Registration/Supply Fee will be due every August thereafter.

Immunizations / Hearing and Vision Screening

Per *Minimum Standards*, children will not be allowed to attend school without current immunizations as specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). Parents must provide us with these records **prior** to attending school and continue to meet applicable immunization requirements for the duration of the child's enrollment. This requirement applies to all children in care from birth through 14 years of age.

Hearing and vision screening test records are required for children 4 years of age and older. These records must be renewed annually.

Health Statements and Authorization Forms

The **Parent's Health Statement and Authorizations** form must be signed by the parent and on file **prior** to the child attending class. Additionally, a physician must sign a **Physicians Health Statement** or equivalent within 12 months of the child's enrollment date attesting to the child's ability to participate in our program. These forms will be provided to you by the school.

If your child has a known food allergy, we are required by *Minimum Standards* to have a food allergy emergency plan for your child. Parents must provide us with a food allergy emergency plan for each child with a known food allergy that has been diagnosed by a health-care professional. The child's health care professional and parent must sign and date the plan. We must keep a copy of the plan in the child's file.

Personal Items

All personal items brought from home should be labeled with the child's first and last name and kept in the child's locker or cubby during the day. Items such as nap animal, blankets, back packs, change of clothes, hair accessories, etc. must fit inside the child's locker. Personal items such as jewelry, money, purses, toys or precious mementos are not permitted at school. These items may pose a safety hazard and distract the children from their school activities, and children may get upset if these items are lost or broken. Children may not bring cell phones, iPads or any electronic devices to school.

The exception to this rule is for show and tell sharing days. On these days, children are encouraged to bring an educational item to share. The items should be labeled and placed in the show and tell basket in the child's classroom.

Montessori materials are expensive to replace, and should one go missing, causes difficulty in completing the activities. Should your child bring home any materials from school such as a bead or block, please return it to the school.

Clothing

Please send children to school in comfortable clothes that are weather appropriate, and closed toed, rubber soled shoes for their safety.

Please be aware that our students will sometimes get dirty during school activities. We offer a natural play environment that promotes experiencing nature, water play, mud and nature.

For these reasons, we ask that **extra clothes** be provided and kept at the school for such occasions. For children in Toddler and Transitional rooms, 2 complete changes of clothing should be provided. For Primary and Kindergarten rooms, 1 complete change of clothing should be provided.

During outside time, tricycles may be available for use. If you wish to have your child wear a helmet, please provide and store in the child's cubby or locker.

Nap Time

We will provide a nap cot for children who take naps. Parents must provide a lightweight blanket and small pillow (if desired) labeled with child's full name. The pillow and blanket should go home weekly for laundering.

Hours of Operation

Elements Montessori is open 12 months a year, Monday through Friday, from 6:30 am-6:30 pm. We will be closed on most major holidays and on staff training/in-service days. Our school calendar will provide the dates of closures.

Parents/Guardians may visit the child-care center at any time during our hours of operation to observe their child, the child-care center's program activities, the building, the premises, and the equipment without having to secure prior approval.

Arrival and Departure

Parents are required to check children in and out of school at our check-in terminal located at the front desk. We ask that all parents escort their child into the building at time of arrival and upon departure at the end of the day. We feel this encourages interaction between families and our teachers and staff.

Authorization for Picking up Children

Children will only be released to those listed on the Authorized Pick-up List. We will ask for photo ID verification if we do not recognize the person.

If your child needs to be picked up by someone not already authorized, please inform the office beforehand so there is no confusion at time of pick-up. **We will require email and verbal (in person or phone call) authorization from you to arrange a pickup from a person not already authorized in our system.** Please inform the person picking up that they will need to present their photo ID at the time of pick up.

It is our number one priority to ensure the safety of every child when concerning this matter; therefore, our team would rather be more stringent than not. We appreciate your understanding concerning this safety issue.

Food – Meals and Snacks

Breakfast, lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks will be provided by the school and are included with tuition. Home-prepared lunches may also be brought to school. We are not responsible for the nutritional value of home-prepared meals.

We ask that lunches brought in do not contain sodas, candy, or fast food. Some suggestions include but are not limited to:

- Fresh fruit (no grapes for under 2's please) – please have prepared and cut up
- Cheese cubes with crackers
- Mini muffins
- Cookies (minimal icing and no nuts please)
- Vegetables with dip
- Popsicles (please check with under 2's)
- Yogurt
- Sandwiches
- Meat and cheese slices

We are a NUT-FREE facility. Any nuts, food containing nuts, or made from nuts or nut derivatives are not allowed. If you send any food with your child or provide any food for any functions held at the facility, please ensure that these foods are NUT FREE. If restricted foods are brought to the school, they will not be served to anyone for safety reasons, and will have to be returned home, or discarded. Restricted foods include but are not limited to: peanut butter, almond butter, almond milk, Nutella, and Chick-Fil-A nuggets and sandwiches.

Human milk is the best source of milk for infants. Additionally, breastfeeding supports optimal health and development. Elements Montessori will provide a comfortable sitting area for breastfeeding mothers, as well as fully support breast milk to be easily provided for children in our care.

Discipline

Elements Montessori's discipline policy is one of re-direction and positive reinforcement that promotes the child's self-esteem and self-control. Praise and encouragement of good behavior, reminding children of expectations, and redirecting are all practiced at our school. Under no circumstance will children ever be spanked, hit, or punished with abusive language or humiliation.

If a child shows negative behavior and does not respond to a gentle, verbal reminder, they will be removed from the group setting to a place within the classroom where they can reflect on their behavior. They will be placed in a safe area (at a table or on the floor depending on age) where they can calm their behavior, yet preferably still observe what they are not currently allowed to participate in within the class. At any point should the said behavior escalate, become disruptive to the other children, or harmful to themselves or others, they will be removed from the classroom to a quiet area within the school. When calm, they will be allowed to return to the classroom.

If the behavior is aggressive, a letter will be sent to the parents of the aggressor, requesting a conference with the parents. If the behavior continues, additional conferences may be requested.

After three incidents of aggressive behavior, the school may have to consider termination of the student's enrollment. We hope to work with all student behavior difficulties, but not to the detriment of the school or other students.

Illness

If your child is ill, please keep him/her home from school. We want our classes to have the healthiest environment possible. The best way to prevent illness is to prevent exposure. If a child is showing signs of illness, they will not be allowed to return to school until they are free of symptoms of illness for at least 24 hours, or a doctor's note clearing the child to return to school is provided. *Minimum Standards* defines illness and when a child may return as shown below:

§746.3601. What types of illness would prohibit a child from attending the child-care center?

*Subchapter R, Health Practices
Division 3, Illness and Injury
April 2017*

Unless you are licensed to provide get-well care, you must not allow an ill child to attend your child-care center if one or more of the following exists:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Medium | (1) The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child-care center activities including outdoor play; |
| Medium-High | (2) The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care; |
| | (3) The child has one of the following (unless a medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in the child-care center's activities): |
| Medium | (A) An oral temperature above 101 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; |
| Medium | (B) A tympanic (ear) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness. Tympanic thermometers are not recommended for children under six months old; |
| Medium | (C) An axillary (armpit) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; or |
| Medium | (D) 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 with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill; or |
| Medium | (4) A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious. |

- *To clarify "uncontrolled diarrhea", this is when a diapered child's stool:
- Is not contained in the diaper; and/or
 - Exceeds two or more stools above the normal for that child; and
 - A toilet-trained child's diarrhea is causing soiled pants and clothing.

§746.3606. When may a child who was ill return to my child-care center?

Subchapter R, Health Practices
Division 3, Illness and Injury
April 2017

A child who was ill may return to your child-care center when:

- Medium (1) The child is free of symptoms of illness for 24 hours; or
- Medium (2) You have obtained a health care professional's statement that the child no longer has an excludable disease or condition.

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she will be isolated, and we will contact you immediately. It is expected that he/she will be picked up within one hour of communication from the school.

Minor Injuries / Incident Reports

As preschoolers are active learners, minor bumps & scrapes tend to occur. Injuries, incidents, or accidents that occur while at school will receive prompt attention. We will determine the severity of the incident and contact you if warranted. Examples of injuries that would cause us to contact you include: an injury to the head or face, and any emergency that requires medical attention.

We will not contact you for minor cuts or scrapes to areas other than the head or face. For other incidents that we determine contacting you is not necessary, an incident report will be sent home documenting the nature of the incident.

Medication

If your child should need medicine dispensed by the school staff, please request and fill out an **Authorization for Dispensing Medication** form. The medicine must be in the original container with the child's full name and date and non-prescription medicine must be labeled with child's name and date along with dispensing information provided by the parent. A single dose of medication is able to be authorized over the phone by parents and will be documented.

*Parent authorization is not required if we administer a medication to a child in a medical emergency to prevent the death or serious bodily injury of the child, provided that the medication is administered as prescribed, directed, or intended. *Elements will always notify parents in a case of an emergency.* Examples of medications that will be kept available in case of an emergency are Children's Benadryl and Baby Aspirin.

Birthdays - Celebration of life

Families may wish to celebrate their child's birthday by having a Celebration of Life. It is a wonderful way to talk about the years of your child's life through pictures and a 'walk' around the earth. Your child's teacher will notify you at the time just before your child's birthday. Parents are invited to bring a treat for the class provided it complies with the mentioned snack suggestions in this document. If you do wish to bring snacks for the whole class, please notify the school ahead of time. Some children have allergies, so we also ask you to confer with your child's teacher before providing any food.

We try to provide a nutritious and healthy menu for your children and ask that you consider the same when providing a special snack for the class. The state of Texas requires that we only provide foods that have a label: therefore, any snacks must be store-bought, please.

Water Activities - Summer

During the summer months, we will provide water activities for the children. If you do not wish to have your child participate in water activities, please inform the front office staff during the summertime when the activities occur.

Pets in the Classroom

Teachers will have the option of having pets in the classroom. If your child is allergic to any animal, please inform us so we can make proper accommodations. Some examples of animals are fish, hamsters, lizards, or small turtles. Elements Montessori will keep documentation of vaccinations on file for the animals if applicable.

Classroom Observation Visits

Parents are always welcome to visit the school at any time during operating hours to observe classrooms at work. Please visit the front desk for some helpful suggestions that will allow you to make the most of your visit.

Inclement Weather / Unplanned Closure Policy

In case of inclement weather, we will follow Klein ISD closings and delays schedules and send out notifications via email, text, our website, or social media. As stated in the **Enrollment Agreement**, if we must close, there will not be a tuition fee adjustment. The faculty salaries and other overhead expenses at the school continue regardless of bad weather or other circumstances.

Emergency Preparedness and Safety

Elements Montessori practices for emergency situations on a regular basis. During emergency situations, teachers will be required to account for all children in care, and parents will be notified in the event of a true emergency via email, text, or phone calls.

Per *Minimum Standards*, we must practice emergency drills as specified:

- a fire drill every month
- a sheltering drill for severe weather at least four times in a calendar year
- a lockdown drill for a volatile or endangering person on the premises or in the area at least four times in a calendar year

We document these drills, including the date of the drill, time of the drill, and length of time for the evacuation, sheltering, or lock-down to take place.

Fire extinguishers are located throughout the building, and a first aid kit is kept in the front office area. Each classroom will also have its own small first aid kit.

Our emergency plans are available to view by parents.

Fire Drills / Fire Emergencies

In the event of a fire drill/fire emergency an audible fire alarm will sound. Each classroom has an evacuation chart posted on the wall with the nearest exits shown. All classes will immediately evacuate in a quick and orderly manner to the parking lot or playgrounds. Teachers must take the classroom binder with them. Upon arrival at the meeting area, the teachers will immediately account for all children in their class. The Director will inform teachers when it is safe to return to their classrooms or other location if necessary. Parents will be contacted if it is deemed necessary for the students to be picked up.

Emergent Severe Weather / Tornado

Office personnel will monitor severe weather threats and notify classes if action is to be taken. In general, all classes with windows will be evacuated to the hallways. Teachers must take a flashlight and the classroom binder with them. When evacuating children to the hallways, teachers will place children in a protective position against the walls. Classes will remain in the hallways until the Director informs them that the threat is over. Parents will be contacted if it is deemed necessary for the students to be picked up.

Predicted Severe Weather - Flooding or Hurricane

If the decision is made to cancel classes before school begins, we will attempt to contact parents by email. If phone lines and internet are down this may not be possible. Please watch your local T.V. stations or listen to local radio for a list of school closings. We will be closed when Klein Independent School District closes. If you have any doubts, please call us at 713-966-6246, or check our website www.EMspring.org or our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/elementsmontessorispring>

Active Threat (intruder) Emergency

In the event of an "Active Threat" staff should press one of the panic buttons in the office area triggering an audible burglar alarm throughout the school. The appropriate emergency agencies will be notified. If a panic button is not available, call 911 to notify the Police. Immediately go into lockdown mode – lock doors, turn off lights - and seek shelter in one of the designated areas. Each staff member will be trained and know how to respond to the emergency. Parents will be contacted as soon as the situation is under control.

Staff Training

All employees are required by *Minimum Standards* to have Continuing Education Unit (CEU) hours of training each year from date of hire (Staff- 24 hours per year, and Management- 30 hours per year). Elements requires that all employees maintain these training hours.

Parent Participation

Elements Montessori will hold periodic school events to promote parent involvement and provide parents with resources that will benefit their child's growth and development. We encourage parents to be actively involved with the education of their child, and ask that every parent attend at least 2 events annually:

- Parent Teacher Conferences – scheduled twice a year, in the Autumn and Spring. Parents meet with their child's teacher to discuss progress and any concerns.
- Elements Community Events – at least 2 annually – check the monthly calendars or website for information as it becomes available

Communication, Questions, and Concerns

School administration and teachers may be reached by phone at 713-966-6246, or email to staff@EMspring.org or of course, by coming to the school during business hours: M-F from 6:30am to 6:30pm. If you have questions or concerns regarding our policies and procedures, or if you wish to schedule a meeting with your child's teacher, you can do so through the front office staff. We are always here to help.

Roles of the School, Parents, and Child

Elements Montessori strives to provide a safe, clean and healthy school with the very best learning environment to promote your child's developmental growth, and the most highly qualified teachers and staff who are passionate about child care and Montessori education.

We encourage our parents to actively participate in your child's educational journey. Parents should attend Parent-Teacher Conferences and other school events in order to be informed about what your child is learning throughout the year. We also encourage parents to support and practice the Montessori philosophy at home to promote consistency. Promptness when bringing your child to school is also very important to a child's daily routine. If possible, children should arrive by 8:30 a.m. to promote consistency with the curriculum schedule.

Your child's role is to have fun as they are exploring and developing in their learning journey. We are here to teach your child "**how** to learn, not **what** to learn". They will begin to develop their own unique learning style and individual curiosities which will set them up for a lifelong love and appreciation for learning.

Parent Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to all terms and conditions stated in the Parent Handbook.

Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Date: _____