

# NewGate

The International Montessori Academy of Sarasota

## PARENT HANDBOOK 2019-2020

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Our Mission

#### *Cultivate a Love of Life... Inspire Academic Excellence*

NewGate School is an independent, non-profit, international, college-preparatory Montessori school.

As a Montessori school, we nurture intelligence, curiosity, and imagination while supporting and developing each student's unique talents. Our goal is to prepare students for both university and life.

NewGate teaches universal values and instills a global perspective, responsible citizenship, and encourages an entrepreneurial spirit.

The aim is to graduate young people who are balanced between their knowledge and character: life-long learners, critical thinkers, and active leaders in their local community, their country, and the world.

### 1.2 Educational Philosophy

This is a very broad overview of our philosophy. We go into greater detail in the **Blueprint of Our Fundamental Values and Beliefs as a School**, which we will be updating this year with input from the school community. A copy of the draft of the proposed expansion and refinement of the school's Blueprint will be posted in the parents' section of the school's website.

Our program rests on four pillars:

- We cultivate within our students a passion for excellence in everything they do, both in and outside of school;
- We nurture among our students a strongly held set of universal values, which include self-respect, respect for others, honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy, compassion, kindness, peacefulness, a sense of concern for others, warmth, and a love of community;
- We help our students to develop a global perspective and international understanding; with this goes a sense of connection to the Earth and a commitment to stewardship of the environment;
- We encourage our students to make a lifelong commitment to contributing to society in meaningful ways.

**NewGate offers:**

#### **An International Curriculum**

We put the world into the palm of our students' hands, studying and celebrating the cultures and nations from which we, or our families, came.

Our curriculum gives students a sense of place (the history, economy, social issues, and culture of our community, state, and nation) and delves deeply into the study of other nations from many perspectives: cultural, social, economic, political, and historical.

The Montessori Foundation works with schools all over the world. Our extensive connections and ongoing work have given us a solid foundation in international studies from the years of early childhood through high school graduation.

Some lessons are taught 'live' on two-way video links by outstanding educators around the world. Elementary and Secondary students are able to meet and collaborate by two-way video link with fellow students in Montessori schools around the world.

Students have opportunities for study and travel to our sister Montessori schools abroad.

NewGate offers a Montessori International Baccalaureate program at the Secondary level for the 11th and 12th grade students.

### **Second Language Classes**

Beginning with Spanish, all students study a second language.

As the school grows, we will introduce additional languages as either third-language optional studies or as alternative-language classrooms.

### **A Diverse School Community within an Independent School Setting**

Our goal is to draw together children and families from all segments of the Sarasota community in an independent school, without seeking government funding.

We build funding for financial aid into our budget while encouraging support for the school from the local community and from national sources.

### **Sustainability**

We place emphasis on creating a sustainable environment.

We teach organic gardening.

Students are taught ongoing lessons on living a life that is more in harmony with a sustainable environment.

### **A Family-Friendly School**

We offer extended-day programs for working families, as well as optional care on days when school is not in session (except for government holidays).

We offer optional summer programs for our Primary and Elementary families.

### **A Montessori, Partnership-Based School Community**

All of our administrative and board decisions are based on clear, written, and commonly understood values and principles of Montessori partnership (*the Blueprint of Our Fundamental Values and Beliefs as a School*).

All members of our school community (faculty, students, parents, and the leaders of the school) are invited to participate in a partnership-based process of ongoing discussion, planning, problem-solving, and self-study/program evaluation.

In a partnership-based Montessori community, we are a 'Circle of Equals.' While the school is led by the highly experienced staff of The Montessori Foundation, every voice may be heard in a culture of kindness and respect as we search for the best solutions.

Parents, teachers, and students are invited to participate in monthly Montessori Family Alliance meetings.

We schedule many opportunities to come together in celebration as a community.

### **A Peace Academy**

Just as The Montessori Foundation teaches peace and partnership skills to schools around the world, we teach peacemaking and leadership skills.

Our students learn how to communicate clearly and assertively in ways that express kindness and respect.

Students also learn conflict resolution, consensus building, and the development of strong relationships.

Our students study the world's great peacemakers and leaders of nonviolent social change.

We encourage our students to contribute to others through a tradition of community service and philanthropy.

### **Computer and Web-based Communication Technology in Everyday Learning**

Because of the nature of young children's brain development, research suggests that early extensive use of computers may be harmful and is definitely less desirable than hands-on learning. As a consequence, computers do not play a significant role in our classrooms until first grade.

At the Elementary and Secondary levels, computers and Internet communication technology have become basic tools in everyday life and are especially valuable in learning certain skills.

Elementary and Secondary students learn everyday use of computers for a wide range of tasks, such as composition, building presentations, problem-solving, data analysis, and creative work. As their interests grow, we introduce digital photography, video production and editing, and graphic design.

Students use video conferencing and online technologies to participate in live lessons and conversations with fascinating people, who represent relevant fields of interest, from science and technology to newsmakers and community organizers.

### **A School for Leaders and Entrepreneurs**

NewGate teaches children to be economically literate and capable.

We help them to understand business and industry, as well as personal economics.

Elementary and Secondary students learn about local businesses, professions, and the roles of local government from field experience and, at the Secondary level, internships.

Students are encouraged and assisted in forming their own small businesses for hands-on learning.

## **2.0 How the School is Organized**

### **2.1 Board of Trustees**

The NewGate School, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3), Tax-Exempt Florida educational corporation. It is governed by a self-perpetuating national Board of Trustees made up of leaders in the American Montessori educational community, present parents, and friends of the school.

The Board of Trustees:

- establishes the school's institutional mission and core values;
- establishes policies under which the school will operate;
- appoints educational leaders to run the school on a day-to-day basis;
- provides fiscal oversight; and
- plans for the school's future.

With a national board, modeled much like those found at a small college, board meetings are only held locally once a year, and more often by video conferencing.

Much of the actual process of exploring issues and reaching consensus takes place either in our Community Meetings or at the committee level.

The current members of the Board can be found on the school website: [www.newgate.edu](http://www.newgate.edu).

### **2.2 NewGate's Relationship with The Montessori Foundation**

To ensure continuity of educational leadership needed to realize the school's long-term vision, on a day-to-day basis, NewGate is managed by The Montessori Foundation, which is a separate non-profit, international educational organization, instrumental in the original development of NewGate as a model Montessori school. In 2010, at the request of the NewGate Board, The Montessori Foundation agreed to once again assume day-to-day leadership of the school. The Foundation provides the administrative team that oversees the school's programs and operations. Tim Seldin, President of The Montessori Foundation, personally leads the school through this next phase of its development. Tanya Ryskind, one of the Foundation's senior leaders, serves as Associate Head of School.

The Montessori Foundation is dedicated to the advancement of Montessori education in the United States and abroad. For more

information, go to [www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org).

As a Lab School led by The Montessori Foundation, NewGate serves to accomplish several objectives in addition to nurturing our students' educational development. These benefit both The Montessori Foundation and our school.

- NewGate keeps the Foundation's team of specialists in Montessori school leadership grounded in the day-to-day realities of running a school;
- NewGate serves as an educational laboratory where the Foundation can develop new curriculum and field-test innovations in educational technology;
- NewGate also provides a setting for ongoing research into the effectiveness and long-term outcomes of authentic Montessori educational programs;
- Finally, NewGate offers a setting where visiting educators can see The Montessori Foundation's principles of Montessori leadership in everyday application.

Our goal is to ensure that NewGate remains a truly excellent Montessori school at all levels and to establish, here in Sarasota, an international center for educational innovation, graduate-level Montessori teacher education, and curriculum development. As the lab school around which each of these programs will be based, our students have the opportunity to participate in some of the most innovative programs in America, giving them an education that will prepare them to succeed both in college and life in a rapidly changing world.

## 2.3 Administration

The Montessori Foundation provides the services of several of its senior staff members, who serve as day-to-day school administrators, while also providing a wide range of other administrative functions. In managing the school, the Foundation reports to NewGate's Board.

**Head of School** Tim Seldin is NewGate's Chief Executive Officer. The Head is charged with implementing the school's long-range plan and overseeing the effective administration of all aspects of the school's operations.

**Associate-Head of School** Tanya Ryskind, the Associate-Head of School works closely with the Head of School to oversee all of the school's educational and extra-curricular programs. She is second in the line of authority in overseeing the operation of the school. Working with the staff, she coordinates all of the school's non-educational programs, including maintenance, transportation, insurance, human resources, safety, student records, and the school office.

**Financial Management** Joyce St. Germaine, Executive Director of The Montessori Foundation, oversees the school's finances, working closely with the Head of School and the school's external accountant.

2.4 Organization Chart



### 3.0 Student Life

As a school founded on Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. NewGate expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school, fellow students, parents, teachers, and staff. The goal of a Montessori education is to establish a safe, warm, and caring environment within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, as opposed to assuming that misbehavior and punishment are inevitable. We also seek to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility, and courtesy, and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

#### 3.1 NewGate's Fundamental Ground Rules: Younger Students

Our ground rules are essentially the same at every age level of the school, although the language and emphasis change somewhat for the older student. This is how we explain them to younger students. Please review these rules with your child:

- Be kind and gentle to one another.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Please do not disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on his or her work.
- Everyone has a right to his or her personal belongings. Please do not touch anything that is not yours without the owner's permission. If you accidentally lose or break something, please replace it without a fuss.
- Everyone here has the right to feel safe and secure. We encourage all people to use words that do not insult or threaten someone else whether in person or through the use of technology.
- Everyone here has the right to be physically safe. Do not hurt or endanger anyone.
- At NewGate, no one is allowed to fight, push, trip, or use any other aggressive behaviors.
- Use the playground equipment as intended. For example, go down the slide and up the ladder.
- Let everyone who wants to play have the opportunity to join in your game.
- Do not throw mulch, sticks or rocks.
- Do not leave your teacher's supervision without permission.
- Consult an adult before entering the parking lot or leaving campus.
- Do not roughhouse or play carelessly.
- Put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.
- Children must be carefully monitored by their parents/guardians when playing on the school grounds after school hours. The fenced-in areas outside the classrooms should not be used after school hours. Children must follow all of the rules above during after school hours.

When anyone at NewGate finds it difficult to follow the school's guidelines for personal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

#### 3.2 Ground Rules for Elementary and Secondary Students

- Respect one another. We expect everyone at NewGate to treat everyone else in the school community with kindness and respect both in words and actions – in person or with the use of technology.
- Respect authority. We expect students to comply with the teachers' directions. We further expect students to seek appropriate methods of appeal should they ever believe it to be necessary.
- Arrive at school promptly every day.
- Dress appropriately in the school uniform.
- Skateboards, wheeled shoes, and rollerblades are not allowed at school.

Under certain circumstances, students may lose their privilege to join their fellow students during their lunch or recess periods. Students may be expected to assist in one of the classrooms or with maintenance around the grounds.

Although we assume that it will never happen, it is important to be clear about our position on drugs and alcohol. We expect our

students to avoid any and all contact with drugs or alcohol. This is defined to include the use, possession, or sale of any controlled substance (drug) or alcoholic beverage. The use, possession, or sale of any alcohol or controlled substance, either during the school day or during any school-sponsored trip, party, or function, is immediate grounds for dismissal from the school.

NewGate will not tolerate irresponsible and dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, emotional or sexual harassment, or verbal abuse directed toward anyone. It is absolutely illegal and forbidden to bring or carry any weapon to school or to use any common object as a weapon. Any theft, vandalism, or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid.

The NewGate campus is a smoke-free area. No one may smoke, or vape, on campus or at any school-sponsored trip, party, or other activity. NewGate will do everything in its power to discourage students from ever starting to smoke.

The entire school community (teachers, students, and administrators) is responsible for helping to maintain the order and neatness of the school environment.

- If you make a mess, clean it up.
- Everyone is expected to help keep the school litter-free by picking up any trash or belongings that are found out of place.
- Do not throw trash on the ground, indoors or out.
- Students are expected to help with the daily clean-up in their class areas.

### **Cyber Bullying**

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other websites provide an environment for bullying behavior online. The school will absolutely not allow any bullying, regardless of the way it is spread. We teach safe and appropriate online behavior and take cyber-bullying seriously.

## **3. 3 Discipline**

Discipline means “to teach.” At NewGate, we use a positive, non-violent approach to discipline. We notice the things that our students are doing correctly and encourage them in that regard. Examples are: “You concentrated so well on that activity.” “Thank you for being so patient or cooperative.” “Thanks for welcoming our visitor. That was so friendly.” “You are really being creative today.” In addition, we use neutral moments to teach social skills through role-plays, discussions, and skits so that our students have practiced appropriate language and actions before situations arise. A large piece of our curriculum at all levels is “Grace and Courtesy,” which includes control of movement and manners. Should a conflict occur, our students are coached in conflict-resolution skills. If a pattern of misbehavior continues, then the parents will be contacted to help determine the cause and find solutions.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment nor physical or emotional intimidation is allowed at NewGate. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of these actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage. Any theft, vandalism, or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school’s values and character. All students are expected to adhere to and respect them to protect one

another. NewGate expects full cooperation from students and families during school hours or whenever the student/family represents the school, whether on NewGate property or away from the campus.

The school must always be a safe learning environment. Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or interferes with the health, safety, or educational development of him or herself, other students, faculty, or staff, may be temporarily or permanently excluded from attendance at school by the Head of School or his or her designee. In this extreme situation, we need to reiterate that there will be no reduction, credit, or remission of tuition or fees.

### **3.4 Starting School**

Even very young children, tend to have a general idea of what “going to school” means. However, the actual event is sometimes overwhelming for both the child and adult. NewGate will help you both with starting school.

Whether it’s your first day at NewGate or the first day of the new school year, many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another and are in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected.

Here are a few points that will help each of you establish some comfort with the school.

- Try to keep the morning stress-free and on a normal schedule.
- Remind each other that you both have been looking forward to “going to school.”
- Remind each other that the children at school are just like you and that the adults at school love children.
- Use the teacher’s name whenever possible.
- Remind each other of how proud you both are that this “first day” is here.
- If this is your child’s first year at NewGate, we encourage you to visit the campus frequently before school starts to allow him or her to become familiar with the new setting. Generally, be reassuring as you talk with your child about his or her new school.

For our youngest new students, “Home Visits” will take place before school starts.

On the first day of school, please don’t linger too long in the class or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure him or her about where you will be during the day and by what time you will pick him/her up in the afternoon.

Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The teachers are wonderful in helping the children in these situations.

### **3.5 Attendance Policy**

All students, even our youngest, are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving before the start of the school day.

Even though we are less formal and more flexible than many schools, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still essential.

Students are expected to be in class by 8:30 a.m. in the Secondary; by 9:00 a.m. at all other levels; to be present in class for the full school day (or for the full morning session in the case of younger students enrolled for the half-day option); and at other required school activities.

Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to the rest of the class, and nothing can be more disruptive to a child’s education than

irregular attendance.

Consistency and routine are essential to every child's development, but they are especially important for younger students. We depend on your family's full support in this area. If we find that your child is frequently absent without a reasonable excuse or is arriving late, we will need to meet to work out a solution. While we are understanding and supportive, it is still essential that you keep your child's absence from school to a minimum.

Although our program is individualized, it still depends on consistency and continuous progress. Every time children miss school for whatever reason, there is a period of readjustment as they try to get back into the routine of their school work. The longer the absence, or when children consistently miss a day or two of school here, and a day or two there, the more detrimental it becomes to their educational development.

If your child is absent for any reason, please call the front office [Ashton Road 941-922-4949 | Upper School (LWR) 941-222-0763] between 8:00-8:30 a.m. This will save unnecessary calls from the school staff. On the day following your child's absence, please send a note to the office to let us know why he or she missed school.

Extended non-planned absences lasting more than three consecutive days require a doctor's verification. Students who miss more than ten days in any given semester may lose credit for the semester at the discretion of school administration. Parents or guardians of a student who misses extended periods or amounts of unapproved absences are potentially liable for truancy as described by the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Parents who wish to have students released from school before the end of the academic day must provide a dismissal slip to the classroom teacher and must be signed out at the front desk of both Ashton and Lakewood Ranch campuses.

For emergencies, please notify the office (Ashton Road 941-922-4949, Lakewood Ranch 941-222-0763).

### **3.6 School Dress Code**

There are two basic reasons that a School Dress Code is employed. Emotionally, children need not feel the power nor the defensiveness that "fashion" can create, even in very young children. The child, not the empowerment that clothes can create (or take away), is the issue at NewGate. No emotional or social advantage should be sought through children's fashion. Secondly, NewGate works very hard to create a safe physical environment and, therefore, asks that children wear the NewGate uniform, which includes shoes that are suitable for running. Open-toed or open-back shoes, very loose-fitting shoes, or shoes with wheels place a child's physical safety at risk.

NewGate requires a school uniform for daily wear. This clothing may be purchased from the student store via <https://newgate.hubbli.com/school-uniform-orders/> Clothing appropriate for physical education is also recommended and should be packed daily for elementary students.

#### **Toddlers**

- Toddlers are not required to wear school polo shirts, as they are often not available in their size.
- Toddlers should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves: elastic waistbands, Velcro sneakers, etc.
- Toddlers should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles at all times. (They should not come to school wearing sandals, flip-flops, shoes with cleats, or roller shoes.)

- *Please label all student clothing.*

### **Primary Students**

- *For daily wear and field trips, students are expected to wear the following uniform:*
- The NewGate collared polo or turtle neck shirt in good repair.
- Primary students should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles at all times. They should not come to school wearing sandals or flip-flops, shoes with cleats, shoes with wheels, or shoes with platform soles.
- Sneakers are required for athletic activities.
- Khaki, navy blue, or black shorts, slacks, skirts, or “skorts” (no jeans).
- Length: shorts/skirts should be suitable to the build and stature of the student and must not be revealing.
- Fabric: close-weave cotton (athletic material used for PE only).
- If students choose to wear sweatshirts in the classroom, they must be NewGate sweatshirts.
- *Again, please label all student clothing.*

### **Elementary Students**

For daily wear and field trips, students are expected to wear the following uniform:

- The NewGate collared polo or turtle-neck shirt in good repair.
- Khaki, navy blue, or black shorts, slacks, skirts, or “skorts” (no jeans).
- Length: shorts/skirts should be suitable for the build and stature of the student and must not be revealing.
- Fabric: close-weave cotton (athletic material used for PE only).
- Elementary students should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles at all times. They should not come to school wearing sandals, flip-flops, shoes with cleats, shoes with wheels, or shoes with platform soles.
- Sneakers are required for athletic activities.
- If students choose to wear sweatshirts in the classroom, they must be NewGate sweatshirts.
- Clothing options for movement and physical education will be shared on an “as needed” basis.

**Secondary Students (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades)** *For daily wear and field trips, students are expected to wear the following uniform:*

- NewGate collared polo or turtle-neck shirt in good repair.
- Khaki, navy blue, or black shorts, slacks, skirts, or “skorts” (no jeans).
- Length: shorts/skirts should be suitable for the build and stature of the student and must not be revealing.
- Fabric: close-weave cotton (athletic material used for PE only).
- Secondary students should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles at all times. They should not come to school wearing sandals, flip-flops, shoes with cleats, shoes with wheels or shoes with platform soles.
- Sneakers are required for athletic activities.
- If students choose to wear sweatshirts in the classroom, they must be NewGate sweatshirts.
- Clothing options for movement and physical education will be shared on an “as needed” basis.

### **All Age Levels**

Also, please adhere to the following requirements:

- No clothing with holes or tears.
- No outfits with bare midriffs or tank tops.
- No pocket chains.
- No oversized pants or shorts.
- No sweat/athletic pants unless otherwise indicated.
- No clothing imprinted with commercial images or product endorsements such as cartoon characters, sports teams, rock bands, brand names, etc., with the exception of shirts received through NewGate School activities, such as one of the school plays, or special events, which can be worn on casual days only.
- Note: If your children prefer to wear skirts, please have them also wear shorts under them. Also, if you allow your child to wear makeup or nail polish, it should be applied at home and not brought to school.
- Jewelry can cause a significant distraction; therefore, we ask students to limit jewelry to earrings and wrist-watches.

### **3.7 Supplies Students Need at School**

#### **Toddler & Primary Students**

- An extra set of clothing, including socks, to be kept at school, held in a one-gallon Ziploc-type bag labeled with your child's name.
- A light blanket for children who nap consistently.
- An insulated plastic lunch box with thermos, for hot lunches when appropriate, that the child can open, a plastic cup, and utensils, which can be sent home nightly. Include a reusable freezer block to keep perishables fresh.
- Toys should not be brought to school.
- Primary classes schedule times for Show and Tell. Your Primary child's teachers will inform you of their expectations. Children enjoy bringing in an item from nature, a special souvenir from a trip, something they have made, or their favorite books. Again, please do not send in toys.

#### **Elementary & Secondary Students**

Elementary and Secondary students will work with a variety of school supplies, which parents will need to purchase before the school year begins. The school mails a detailed list over the summer to each family. These supplies will need to be replenished during the course of the year.

There may be a few costs for optional activities that are not covered by tuition, such as school pictures, special extra-curricular activities, field trips, research trips, and personal books.

### **3.8 Textbooks**

The Montessori curriculum is research-based rather than being dependent on textbooks as the primary focus of learning. Much of our students' work in school involves the use of hands-on materials that remain in the classroom or readings in a wide range of reference or resource books from school and public libraries. Some subjects do involve the use of textbooks that will remain with the children throughout the year.

Naturally, it is essential that children respect and take care of their books. Students are responsible for lost or damaged textbooks or library books.

### **3.9 Lost and Found**

Everything brought to school should be clearly marked with the owner's name. Any unlabeled belongings that are found will be kept in our lost and found in the office for one month, during which time we will attempt to identify to whom they belong. After one month, any items that are still unclaimed will be given to Goodwill.

### **3.10 Lunch**

NewGate students bring their lunch to school every day in a clearly labeled lunch box.

Our school places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition. Lunch is a very important part of not only your child's school day but his or her health education as well. We need to count on you to work with us to teach the students about health and nutrition.

We discourage the use of "Lunchables" and other items that contain highly processed foods, excessive packaging, and candy. Please limit foods that require microwaving.

With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters, slicing up fresh fruit, and preparing bite-sized slices of cheese.

Please do not send your child to school with sugary desserts or drinks, including sodas. If you want to send in a prepared drink, please read the label and look for 100 percent pure fruit juices.

We recommend lunch boxes with built-in cool packs. Please send juice in a thermos or a securely closed plastic container. We encourage you to place foods in reusable or recyclable containers.

All uneaten food that can be contained will be sent home. You'll want to monitor your children's lunchboxes to see what they like and dislike and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing a healthy lunch.

### **3.11 Snacks**

Primary students and Toddlers have nutritional snacks in the mornings and afternoons. The Department of Children & Families (DCF) requires that snacks include two of the four food groups. We also have many food preparation lessons that include fruit, veggies, cheese, etc. We only serve water.

Elementary students usually pack a snack in their lunch box. We recommend whole-food choices and the avoidance of excessively salty or sugary snack items.

**Special Dietary Restrictions:** Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. Please be sure to notify the teachers if your child should avoid certain foods. This will be taken into account in planning snacks or on days when the class prepares its own lunch. We will accommodate unique allergies and medical conditions wherever possible.

### **3.12 Field Trips**

Classes will periodically take field trips to local points of interest during the year.

They are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by a class or to take advantage of special community events.

Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. The school's bus may sometimes be used for these events.

We will always notify you of any trips that are planned for your child's class. Uniforms are to be worn on all field trips. Elementary and Secondary classes will typically have one or more overnight trips during the year. These trips will be carefully planned and chaperoned.

#### **Parent Volunteer Drivers and Chaperones on Field Trips**

- Volunteer field trip drivers must have a copy of a valid Florida driver's license, a copy of their automobile insurance, and a cell phone number on record in the school office. The school's insurance does not cover field trip volunteer drivers.
- If you volunteer to drive, please plan to stay with the group during the field trip unless the teachers confirm that you are not needed to chaperone as well.
- If you wish to volunteer to drive or help chaperone on a field trip, please do not bring any younger siblings along. As a parent volunteer, we need to closely monitor the children from the class. If younger children come along, this is almost impossible.
- In the event that you will be coming along to chaperone but are not driving, please ride in the car to which you are assigned. We do not allow students to switch cars to sit with friends and ask that you model that rule.
- The teachers will have a handout with further suggestions for making the field trip a success.

#### **Secondary Student Drivers and Field Trips**

Secondary students who drive may, with their parents' permission, drive themselves on field trips. They may not, however, drive any other students during the school day without formal written permission from all parents and the Head of School and the Upper School Head.

### **3.13 Birthdays**

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. At the Primary level, we have a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. Please send in a photograph of your child at each age level: at birth; one-year-old; age two; etc. You will also want to send in a short written narrative describing some of the things that were happening in your child's life and your family at each age level. It is especially nice to send in a special snack in honor of your child's birthday. Birthday snacks should follow the same guidelines as lunches – nothing sugary or chocolate. If you need suggestions, please ask the teachers.

Please do not send birthday invitations to school to be passed out. They should be sent through the mail.

Elementary and Secondary students also enjoy a special birthday snack. Students may be asked to prepare a personal timeline. Your child's teacher will discuss this at your class' parent orientation evening in August.

### **3.14 Celebrations**

From time to time over the year, classes will present lessons or activities designed to bring cultural celebrations to life. They are designed to explore the culture and traditions of other nations or cultural groups within the United States from a child's perspective, as is appropriate to the age level of the class. Some have their origin in religious tradition, such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter, and Passover, which are typically presented at low key and simple levels. Some may involve international festivals that we may celebrate as part of our studies of other countries, such as Diwali from India and Loy Krathong from Thailand. Some of the other holidays that we celebrate at the class or school-wide level include:

- International Children's Day
- Thanksgiving
- Winter Celebration
- African American History Month and Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Grandparents' Day
- Valentine's Day
- Presidents' Day
- Earth Day
- Commencement Ceremonies

We do not teach religion, even though some of the cultural activities are religious in their origin. In such cases, we present them from an age-appropriate child's perspective, as special days of family feasting, merriment, and wonder. Young children rarely catch more than a glimmer of the religious meaning behind the celebration. Our goal is to use the cultural celebration to build a sense of community within the classroom and to introduce children to the different cultures of the world. We focus on how children would normally experience a festival within their culture: the special foods, songs, dances, games, stories, presents—a potpourri of experiences aimed at all the senses of a young child.

On the other hand, one of our fundamental aims is the inspiration of the child's heart. While we do not teach religion, we do present the great moral and spiritual themes, such as love, kindness, joy, and confidence in the fundamental goodness of life in simple ways that encourage the child to begin the journey toward being fully alive and fully human. Everything that we do is intended to nurture a sense of joy and appreciation of life, a sense of the poetic, and humanity's interrelationship with the Earth.

It does not help to avoid the issue of cultural differences. We teach our students to understand and accept them. Truly, though we are all the same inside, we are very different from one another in the ways we live our lives and perceive the world. To build peace, we must learn to see people as they really are and not be afraid of that which is different from our own ways. With older children, this readily extends to the study of political and moral differences among societies.

We don't mean to suggest that we ought to teach children that everything that people do is equally good. Over the centuries, humankind has begun to develop global standards by which we judge certain actions and political systems to be destructive of the human spirit.

While Dr. Montessori felt that we must teach our children how to live in peace and how to make a positive contribution to the society in which they live, she believed, first, in the importance of nurturing and protecting the dignity and integrity of the individual.

We will always let families know about any cultural celebrations that are planned in advance. Please contact us if you ever have any questions, or if you are uncomfortable having your child participate in a particular topic.

## 4.0 Health and Safety

### 4.1 When Your Child is Ill

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call the school office in the morning between 8:30 am and 9:00 am to let us know that he, or she, will be absent.

Students with infectious diseases, such as chicken pox or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children's health, it is vital that you let the office know your child's diagnosis as soon as possible.

Please keep your child home as long as there is a fever present, a sore throat, eye infection, continuous and colored nasal excretions, or persistent chest cough. We determine the need to send a child home by both the symptoms listed above and by their behavior. Children who fall asleep during the morning work cycle or who are unusually cranky or sad during the day (not their usual temperament) may be sent home. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, head lice, or an undiagnosed skin rash should also remain at home. Students will be sent home if any of the above symptoms appear while they are at school. They should remain at home for at least the next 24 hours.

### 4.2 If Your Child Gets Sick at School

In the Toddler classrooms, the teachers are diligent about assisting children with keeping their noses and faces clean and free of mucous. The children are learning this process but require more adult intervention during the times of the year when illness is more prevalent. In the Primary classrooms, we teach children how to blow their noses and wash their hands. We strongly encourage parents to help their children practice these skills at home and support these very important self-help skills.

If your child ever feels ill, we will keep him, or her, quiet and comfortable. If he, or she, seems to be too ill to remain in school, we will contact you to arrange for him, or her, to be picked up within an hour. If a parent cannot be reached within half an hour, we will begin calling the emergency contacts on the TADS "Enrollment Summary Report" form that is kept on file in the office. The child will be isolated from the rest of the children in the napping room or the office until someone is able to take him/her home.

We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, yet all of our children get ill from time to time. **You will want to make arrangements in advance with a friend or a relative for any times when you cannot come yourself.**

Because colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if he, or she, has a fever, is nauseous, or displays any other symptoms of illness.

If your child has fallen behind in his, or her, schoolwork due to an extended absence, please contact the teachers to develop a strategy to help him, or her, catch up.

Weather permitting, students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, then he should not come to school until he can participate in all school activities.

### 4.3 Emergency Care

In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your Emergency Contact Information up to date in TADS. **We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.**

If your child needs immediate medical attention and you cannot be reached, your Enrollment Agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room at either Doctor's Hospital (located on Cattlemen & Bee Ridge Roads) or Sarasota Memorial Hospital (located on US Route 41). Naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you.

### 4.4 Medication

Except under extraordinary situations (please see examples), we do not administer medication at school.

Please **do not** send in any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs or topical creams, except under a doctor's instructions as explained below.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that dosages are taken during the hours when the student is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably should not be in school for a full day.

We also ask that students **do not** bring vitamins, flower essences, or other homeopathic remedies to school.

When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary that medication be administered during school hours, a representative of the school will give said medication to your child in accordance with the following procedures: Any medication brought to school must be left with the staff in the school office where it will be kept in a locked area.

Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any student except as authorized by you, as parent or guardian, and by the child's physician, in accordance with the following procedures:

- All medications sent from home must be accompanied by the "Medication/Treatment Authorization Form" signed by a physician before the first day the medication is to be administered at the school. We cannot administer any medication sent to school without the appropriate, completed authorization form. If this happens, we will attempt to contact you.
- The original bottle containing the medication must be clearly labeled with the student's name, medication contained, and the time(s) and amount(s) of dosage.
- As a parent or guardian, you are responsible for administering the first day's dosage of any new medication at home.
- A copy of the "Medication/Treatment Authorization Form" may be obtained from the office or downloaded from our website.

### 4.5 Safety Drills

The office will conduct monthly drills that respond to a number of safety challenges. If parents are on campus during a drill, they are expected to join the drill as directed.

- The alarm will ring continuously in the event of a fire or a drill.

- When the bell rings, all classes will dismiss into designated areas and remain in their groups.
- The teachers will make certain that the room is empty and close the doors.
- The teachers will join the class outside the building, take attendance, and notify the office if anyone is missing.
- Students and teachers are expected to remain in the designated area until informed that they may return to class.

#### **4.6 School Bus Safety**

Because of their need for consistency, we rarely schedule field trips for Toddlers and Primary students. When we do, we do not transport them on the school's buses.

The following applies to students who are old enough to ride the school bus. Please be sure that you understand and can support the following basic safety rules.

Safety is our prime concern, and we must insist that every student follow certain rules of safe and courteous conduct while riding our school bus.

- Seat belts must be worn at all times while on the bus.
- Students must stay in their seats at all times while the bus is moving.
- Students must remain seated until the bus has come to a complete stop and the adult in charge has said it is safe to move.
- For everyone's safety, students should not shout, engage in horseplay, or switch seats during the trip.
- Students may never stick their hands (or anything else) out of the bus window.
- Students may never throw anything out of the bus.
- Students may not play with sharp objects, such as pens or pencils, on the bus.
- Students may not eat or drink on the bus unless the driver gives permission.
- Every student is expected to set a good example for the younger children. Students language and behavior should always be polite, respectful, and considerate.
- Students may not curse, act foolishly, or break any school rules.
- With permission from the adults in charge, students may use earphones if they wish to listen to a radio or mpg player on the bus.
- All students must abide by all of the normal school rules while on the bus.

#### **4.7 Incident Reports**

In the event that a child has a behavioral incident or is injured at school, the teacher or staff member in attendance will complete an Incident Report. This form will explain the circumstances of the incident. Parents will be asked to read the report, sign it, leave a copy at the school, and take a copy home. Feel free to call us if you have additional questions related to the incident.

#### **4.8 Child Abuse Reporting Policy**

All employees are required by the State of Florida to read the Florida Department of Children and Families' Professional Guide titled, "Child Abuse and Neglect in Florida," and to remain informed of Florida law regarding child abuse.

Florida Statute, Chapter 39, Part II, requires anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, to immediately report such knowledge or suspicion.

NewGate School employees, who are acting in their official or professional capacity and become aware or suspect that a student has suffered, faces the threat of any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition that reasonably indicates child abuse or neglect, shall immediately notify the Florida Department of Children and Families' Florida Abuse Hotline (1-800-96-ABUSE).

Florida law allows for anonymous reporting. However, we encourage our staff to inform the Head of School that a report has been made. At such time, a written record would be made and placed in the child's file of any physical injuries, suspected sexual misconduct and evidence thereof, signs of neglect, drastic changes in behavior, and direct quotations from the child indicating abuse. This information would also be given to the proper authorities when reporting suspected abuse. In the event that such a report was made and the administration was notified, the parent would be informed by the Head of School.

#### **4.9 School Cancellation Due to Weather**

If severe weather conditions make travel hazardous, the school will open late, close early, or be canceled. We will make these decisions based on the safety of students and staff and in accordance with the Sarasota County Public Schools. Closing will be broadcast to parents by email, or text messaging.

In the event of a hurricane watch, the school will remain open. If a hurricane warning should go into effect during school hours, parents will be called to pick up their children, and the school will remain closed as long as the warning is in effect. We will try home, work, and cell numbers. Please keep us up to date with these numbers throughout the year.

### **5.0 Faculty and Staff**

NewGate is committed to setting high professional standards for personnel and programs. Our promise is to physically and emotionally protect all students, and deliver the highest quality instruction and learning experience. You will find a directory of our faculty and staff and their backgrounds on the school website: [www.newgate.edu](http://www.newgate.edu).

All members of our faculty and staff share:

- Commitment to children's well being
- Commitment to Montessori education
- Loyalty to NewGate's vision and mission
- Ability to work with others in delivering quality education

Our faculty and staff:

- Support the school's mission and each other.
- Abide by established professional standards and the conditions of our accreditation.
- Abide by the laws of the State of Florida and all federal laws that govern our relationship and our work.
- Submit for federal background checks. (All volunteers who spend time with children as unsupervised coaches or leaders of any activities must also have the same background check.)

All members of our faculty and staff are supervised and reviewed as indicated by the Organizational Chart and are consistently guided to set goals for themselves and their programs.

## **6.0 Parents and the School**

### **6.1 Creating Partnership**

Parent involvement creates partnerships, builds community within the school, and gives the children a sense of connection outside the school day. Being directly involved in the school also provides an opportunity to view the school from a unique, internal perspective, giving families a much deeper appreciation for how devoted the teachers are to the children and how committed the administration is to their vision.

We encourage families to feel at home and participate in the broader life of the school through social, educational, and volunteer activities. As a community of parents and educators, our ideas and input help to literally shape the school.

### **6.2 Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent**

Parents play a crucial role at NewGate. This is a community of parents and educators, many of whom are NewGate parents as well.

NewGate strongly encourages families to feel at home and to participate in the broader life of the school through social and educational activities, committees, task forces, and the Montessori Family Alliance and community meetings. Many parents spend a considerable amount of time at NewGate as volunteers. We appreciate it immensely!

One of the most valuable contributions that families make to the school is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the office, assisting in the classrooms, serving as field trip drivers, planning the next special event or serving on school committees.

Parents and grandparents, who give of their time and talent, share with their families special memories of experiences and friendships that endure well beyond their children's graduations.

#### **A few ways in which you can help out at NewGate School:**

- Volunteer a few hours a week to help in the office
- Lend your time and support to our fundraising efforts
- Volunteer to be an Ambassador Family to parents new to the school
- Serve on one of the school's committees
- Help the teachers organize field trips or special lessons
- Join us for weekly open houses to meet prospective families
- Help organize special events
- Help our students work in the children's gardens
- Share your talents and special interests
- Volunteer your time to coach a team or after-school club
- Serve as a Room Parent
- Attend Family Alliance Evenings
- Attend Community Meetings

NewGate depends on our combined talents.

### **6.3 Communication Between Home and School**

Communication between school and parents is vital. Feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress.

Please remember that the teachers' responsibility during the school day is to the children.

Morning arrival and afternoon dismissal times are particularly sensitive transition periods when the students need the attention of their teachers. For this reason, we ask that interruptions during these times be kept to a minimum.

If you must speak to your child's teacher in the morning, make arrangements to do so before school begins. Likewise, you can make arrangements to speak to the teacher after school. Otherwise, you can correspond via a note or email, and the teacher will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference.

During the school year, we will send home emails, letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements. Generally, such information will be sent electronically directly to your email address. Occasionally, we will send home some printed correspondence with your child in the weekly Tuesday Folders.

Please check your email daily. We use email, Montessori Compass, Hubbli, Constant Contact, Facebook, Twitter, the school's website, and other online resources to communicate with families. This saves trees. Important emails and announcements are archived in the password-protected area of our website: [www.newgate.edu](http://www.newgate.edu).

### **6.4 Communication with Second Families**

Whenever parents are separated, divorced, or for some other reason are not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters.

- Both parents at their respective addresses, at no extra cost, will receive copies of progress reports and announcements mailed out or sent home with students. Likewise, all school emails will be sent to both parents.
- Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents.
- When family conferences are scheduled, we need to avoid separate conferences for each parent. It is very important to communicate the same thing to both parents at the same time. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the office to discuss the situation.
- We encourage both parents to attend all school events.
- Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.
- An exception may be requested by court order prior to the child's entering school by either one or both parents. The request would require full consideration of the legal ramifications and other relevant matters, to the effect that dual communication is not required, desired, or to be pursued.
- If granted, this exception (documentation by signed court order) would be noted in the child's permanent file and honored as indicated.

### **6.5 Observing the Classes at Work**

Parents are invited, and even urged, to observe the children at work. Contact your child's teachers to let them know when you would like to visit. Unless arrangements have been made in advance, they may not have time to speak with you. You will want to

see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence; therefore, when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient observation of your child and his or her classmates at work.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during these periods.

All visitors and volunteers need to sign in and obtain a visitor name tag from the school office upon arrival. You will also be given an Observation Feedback form that will assist you in observing and will give us much appreciated feedback about the classrooms.

### **Points to Look for When You Observe**

- As you sit down to carefully observe in a Montessori classroom for the first time, what catches your eye? What do you notice on your second or third visit?
- How is the classroom organized? What do you notice about the layout of activities, furnishings, and shelves?
- Pay attention to the way the adults interact with the children. What do you notice?
- Perhaps, during your observation, you will see the teacher redirect or discipline a child. What do you notice?
- As you observe, try to look for any unwritten rules and procedures that the children are following.
- Focus on a particular child other than your own. Follow his or her work during the course of at least a half hour. How does she spend her time? How does she select work?
- We are hopeful that you will see the teachers present several different lessons to either small groups or individual children during your visit. What do you notice about the way they teach?
- What do you notice about the educational materials on the shelves and how the children work with them?
- What about the Montessori materials seems to be most attractive to the children?
- Focus on a few different Montessori materials. What concepts or skills does each isolate?
- How do the teachers introduce the children to the materials? Try to catch one child learning from another.
- Try to observe children correcting their own work through the control of error built into each Montessori material. How do they self-correct?
- As you observe the children at work, do you sense that there are certain tasks that the children prefer? Are there any that they seem to avoid?
- How do you, as an adult, respond to the Montessori materials? Are you drawn to them? Do you wish that you could have gone to a Montessori school?
- What sort of interactions do you notice between the younger and older students?
- During your observation, did the teachers spend most of their time with the younger or older students?
- Based upon what you observed, try to determine what factors led them to concentrate most of their attention on one age group or another?

## 6.6 “So, What Did You Do At School Today?”

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question? Did you get the common answer, “Nothing”? Or, possibly, your child tells you every day that he or she did the same thing-such as play-dough or spooning beans. Do not be alarmed. We can assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support her development.

Young children, in particular, often have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They have done so many things that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes they don’t remember the name of the materials that they used - such as the trinomial cube, the metal insets, or the addition strip board.

In addition to the difficulty that children may have in describing their school experience, you may have noted that not many papers come home depicting your child’s work. They can be doing complex math, word-building, writing in a sand tray or on chalkboards, geography, or science lessons-all with manipulative materials that will have no paperwork to show you their progress.

### How can you find out what your child is doing in school?

- Ask your child questions that are more specific. “Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with colors?”
- Occasionally, park at dismissal and take your child into the classroom in order for him, or her, to show you his, or her, favorite lessons. Please be aware of the teacher’s time for clean-up and planning at the end of the day.
- Set up a time to observe your child in class.
- Read a Montessori book.
- Stop in after school and talk to your child’s teacher(s), or set up an appointment for a formal conference if you prefer.
- Attend school meetings and workshops.
- Play ‘school’ with your child at home. Sometimes, children will show you through their play what they are learning.
- Be patient. In time, it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning every day.

## 6.7 Supporting Your Child’s Experience at Home

Parents are often amazed by the level of independence and sense of responsibility they observe in their children when they are in their Montessori community.

Parents often ask, “How can we get them to be this way at home?” Typically, home is a more laid back environment than school (as it should be). One can, however, encourage more independence and responsibility at home by applying some of the same principles we apply when preparing our classrooms.

Here are some suggestions to help bridge the school and home experience and assist your child in feeling that he or she is a capable person and a contributing member of the family.

- Provide a stable stool to assist your child in reaching the sink, light switches, toothbrushes, books, toys, and other items of personal use.
- Hang clothes on a low rack in the closet so that the child can hang up his own clothes. Organize clothing in drawers, grouped for mixing and matching to make choosing clothing easier. Keep appropriate school clothes separate from play clothes to avoid the morning argument.
- Encourage your child to help with laundry. Younger children can fold and help put clothes away. Older children can actually

be taught to do their own laundry.

- Hang mirrors and art at your child's eye level (at least in their room; but a few carefully placed in other areas of the house are nice, too).
- Place appropriate, nutritious food items in a lower cabinet so that your child can prepare his/her own snack when hungry.
- Place everyday dishes in a lower cabinet so children can help unload the dishwasher. This also helps when children are preparing snacks.
- Put milk, juice, and water, in smaller containers in the refrigerator so the child will be able to successfully get his own drink.
- Provide clean-up supplies for your child and give him a lesson on how to clean up his own messes. (Suggested supplies: small broom and dustpan, carpet sweeper, dust buster, sponges, and towels.)
- Place toys, art supplies, and books on reachable shelves instead of in a toy box. Rotate these items so that the child has only a manageable amount out at any given time. Use baskets, desk organizers, and crates to keep 'like' items together and to display them in an attractive manner.
- Provide a shelf or an area in every room for your child to keep some of his/her activities.
- Create a self-quieting corner for each child, so they have a special place to go when they need to calm themselves or when you need to recommend that they take some time to calm down and get centered.
- Ask yourself, "What new thing can I show my child how to do for himself, or herself, this week?"
- Invite an older child to help reorganize or redecorate his room
- Involve even the youngest children in chores around the house, increasing the expectation as the child gets older.
- Make sure your child has a comfortable place to do homework, research, and special projects.
- Monitor and limit TV and computer time.
- Read to your child (no matter how old he or she is, read together!)
- Talk about feelings with your child.
- Use natural consequences instead of punishment. Natural consequences are the result of an action taken by a child that actually helps a child, without adult intervention, to learn about how that action affects them and others.

## **6.8 Montessori Family Alliance and Community Meetings**

On the first (Lakewood Ranch Campus) and third (Ashton Campus) Thursday evenings for the months of September, October, November, January, February, March, and April, NewGate parents, teachers, administrators, and interested students are invited to meet together for Montessori Family Alliance Evenings, which will typically begin with a presentation or discussion on a topic of specific interest and end with a Community Meeting that offers us the opportunity to explore issues of common interest in an open forum.

Montessori Family Alliance gatherings may discuss issues of parenting, curriculum, or Montessori education in general or at your student's level. The Montessori Family Alliance is an international program for parents of children enrolled in Montessori schools around the world. It's mission is to provide opportunities for parents to better understand the psychology, research, and practical insights into the global community of Montessori schools. Presentations incorporating films, multimedia, and/or hands-on workshops may be facilitated by administrators, faculty or guest speakers.

In January, the Montessori Family Alliance Night will focus on families whose child(ren) will be "moving up." This program will invite current students and families to share their experiences with "moving up" families. Moving up is a milestone for all children whether they are moving from the toddler environment to the Children's House or from 6th year to the adolescent program at Lakewood Ranch. We invite and welcome all families to hear about these very important next steps in a child's educational journey.

The Community Meetings often offer feedback and advice to the administration and Board. Parents and teachers who participate tend to gain a much deeper understanding of the school's mission, strengths, and the issues that challenge it. Many will appreciate the opportunity to have a voice in the life of the school. Community Meetings offer us a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of school programs and policies.

Community Meetings usually begin with all present agreeing on the topics that they would like to address. One member of the community will be selected to facilitate the meeting, ensuring that everyone is heard and helping the group maintain its focus. A recorder will prepare a summary of what was discussed and a list of any topics to be addressed at the next scheduled meeting.

Community Meetings are process oriented. Their value comes from personal attendance and participation. They provide a forum for the open exchange of ideas, not necessarily to produce answers or proposals. Many school-related issues cannot be addressed and resolved in a large-group problem-solving setting.

In the normal course of the discussion, the group may identify issues that should be addressed by the faculty, administration, or trustees. At times, they may ask the school to make a more formal presentation on a given topic of interest. Any topic that is raised during a meeting that would properly require time to prepare handouts and clarify information will be tabled and scheduled for the next meeting.

The focus of Community Meetings is on topics of common interest, not individual issues concerning one family, which normally cannot be discussed in a public setting.

Because the purpose of these meetings is to facilitate communication, all views will be heard and discussed. It is perfectly normal for values and perspectives to vary within the group. As members of a school community that teaches children kindness and respect, it is very important for us, as parents and teachers, to model a high level of consideration and respect for each other. No one can be allowed to dominate a meeting; it is neither appropriate nor fair to the larger group. Everyone present will be encouraged to participate and contribute; however, silence is a legitimate part of any meeting.

Finally, we should all strive to remember that we are on the same side. We share many common values and interests that brought us together. We need never see ourselves as adversaries, even if we should disagree on a given issue. Concerns and issues that need to be explored and addressed are normal in any institution. There is no such thing as a perfect school, and there will always be a need for new ideas and ongoing improvements.

## **7.0 Academic Life**

### **7.1 Homework**

Montessori schools traditionally do not assign homework until the Upper Elementary grades, and even then, it rarely looks like the homework many parents remember from their own school years.

Why don't we assign homework like everyone else? Don't we want children to get into good colleges? The answer is: *of course we do!* But why would we believe that assigning hours of homework to children after a long school day is a right way to go about it?

Dr. Montessori writes, *"My vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding on that certificate from the secondary schools to the University, but of individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher, by means of their own*

*activity, through their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner evolutions of the individual."*

Later she adds, *"The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core. We do not want complacent pupils, but eager ones. We seek to sow life in children, rather than theories, to help them in their intellectual, emotional, and physical growth, and for that we must offer them grand and lofty ideas to explore."*

Maria Montessori

School is only one part of a child's day. Children work hard in school, just as their parents do at the office. All of the usual arguments that parents and mainstream teachers use to justify homework miss the point. Homework does not teach children responsibility, time-management skills, self-discipline, or more of what they should be learning during the day. What it teaches is how to put up with a job that they dislike. Many teachers seem to think that they can help their students become better educated by requiring them to do tasks that few would ever do voluntarily. Gifted teachers get the job done in a normal school day by inspiring a sense of interest, curiosity, and enthusiasm among their students.

Our goal in Montessori is to inspire in children a sense of purpose in their lives, a sense of their own individual minds. We want them to pursue things that interest them, pursuing information, skills, and insights on their own, not waiting to be spoon fed by adults.

- Larry Page and Sergey Brin, founders of Google Inc., reflected on their own experience. *"We both went to Montessori school, and I think it was part of that training of not following rules and orders, being self-motivated, questioning what's going on in the world, and doing things a little bit different, that contributed to our success."*

After school, children should have time to follow their own interests and play with family and friends.

Homework can easily become a power struggle between children and adults. And the sad thing is that there is no need if schools instill a love of learning, rather than a sense of obligation and fear.

Whenever children voluntarily decide to learn something, they tend to engage in their work with a passion and attention that few students will ever invest in tasks that have been assigned. Our goal is to inspire joyful thinking not compliance.

**Reading and Writing Every Day:** We ask children to read and write daily. We suggest that younger children and parents set aside time for reading whatever they find interesting. Older students will be asked to read books, both fiction and non-fiction, newspapers, essays, and thoughtful magazines on a daily basis. We ask them to write every day as well, both in their journals and on a wide range of creative and expository writing exercises.

Normally, our teachers will send home a packet of suggested projects that children might want to work on at home. These activities are meant as an experience at home, not always as a continuation of the work that goes on in school. Sometimes, students will have work that requires speaking with a parent, friend, or grandparent and will need to be done at home, and sometimes students will choose to do some work at home. The weekly homework, due each Monday or the first day we meet for the week, is meant to be an experience in planning and organizing as well as doing the work and sharing it with the rest of the class.

Here are a few examples that Elementary and Secondary students and families have found to be both interesting and challenging:

- Perform an act of charity or extraordinary kindness.
- Plan and prepare dinner for your family with little or no help from your parents.

- Plan and prepare a dinner for your family typical of what the ancient Greeks might have eaten.
- Read books that touch the soul and fire the imagination with your parents. Discuss the books that you are reading in class.
- Visit a church or synagogue of a different faith than yours. Meet the rabbi, priest, or minister and learn as much as you can about this other faith.
- Go to a boatyard and learn what you can about different kinds of boats, their purpose, cost, advantages, and disadvantages.
- Buy some stock and follow its course over time. Pretend that you have a thousand dollars to invest, ten thousand, or a million.
- How many square feet of carpet would it take to cover your entire house? Convert this number into square yards. Call two carpet dealers. What kinds of carpet do they offer, and what would it cost to carpet your house?
- Build a scale model of the floor plan of your house out of cardboard, one floor at a time. Be as careful and exact as you can.
- Develop a pen pal in a Montessori school across the USA or in another country.
- Prepare a list of all the things that you would like to do with your life: career, cities to visit, mountains to climb, things you want to learn, etc.
- Teach your dog a new trick.
- Build a model of the Parthenon, an aqueduct, or some other historical structure.
- Plant a garden, tree, or some bulbs around your house.
- Write a play and perform it with some friends for your class.
- Make puppets with your parents or friends, build a puppet theater and put on a performance.
- Learn about magic and master a new trick.
- Build a bridge out of popsicle sticks held together with carpenter's glue that will span a three-foot chasm and support several bricks.
- Interview your grandparents about their childhood. Write a biography or share what you learn.
- Using one of the better books on children's science projects, select an experiment or project, carry it out, and prepare a report that documents what you did.
- Build a model sailboat using different types of sail plans. Race them on a pond with your class.
- Select a city somewhere in the world where you have never traveled. Find out everything that you can.
- Learn something new and teach it to someone in your class.
- Visit a real artist in his/her studio.
- Learn first aid.
- Prepare a timeline of the presidents of the United States, along with picture cards, name tags, and fact cards. Study until you can complete the timeline on your own.
- Make your own set of constructive triangles, golden beads, or some other familiar Montessori material.
- Using 1 cm as a unit, build out of clay, wood, or cardboard pieces to make up units, tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, hundred thousands, millions...up to one billion.
- Prepare a scale model of the solar system in which the distance from the sun to Pluto will be two miles. Prepare carefully measured models of the planets and sun and calculate the distance that each will need to be placed on the scale away from the sun.

## Secondary

Homework may take on many different forms in the Secondary classes. Often homework involves projects that are done over several days or weeks.

Occasionally, students may be asked to do additional or background work on their art projects at home. Finally, although time is provided in class, Secondary students may need to work on long-term projects at home. For all assigned homework, a due date is

discussed with the students and is then set. If assignments are continually not completed when due, the teachers will contact the student's parent by email or phone.

The homework is not intended to be a burden or simple busy-work for the students. Rather, it is designed as a vehicle for daily practice and reinforcement of skills, as well as an opportunity to more deeply penetrate a given subject or project on their own. It is, therefore, beneficial to help your student establish a regular time and a quiet space within which to complete the assigned work.

Homework assignments are posted in Google classroom.

## **7.2 Technology in the Classroom**

NewGate believes that computers and other technology can be very valuable learning tools. However, based on current child development and brain research, we feel that younger children receive more benefit from the use of hands-on learning activities. For this reason, we do not make use of computers in our Early Childhood classrooms.

At the Elementary and Secondary levels, we are very committed to integrating technology into all learning areas. Computers and the Internet are used as a practical resource for research and creative writing. We would like our students to see computers and technology as the wonderful tools they are, rather than simply a toy on which to play games. For this reason, we are very careful about the types of software that we introduce. Ultimately, our goal is for students to learn how to prepare effective PowerPoint presentations, use publishing software, create websites, create multimedia presentations, and more. Typically, it is the students who drive a school forward in the use of technology. We fully expect them to keep us challenged in offering them cutting-edge technological opportunities.

## **7.3 Family Conferences**

It is very important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or to discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the teachers' responsibilities during the school day are to the students. Morning arrival, in particular, is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to meet before school begins. Otherwise, you can correspond via a note or email and the teachers will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed.

Conferences are scheduled twice during the year, once in October and again at the end of February. See the school calendar for details. Students who are in Kindergarten and above will attend all conferences to review their progress and set individual goals. Additional conferences will be scheduled upon request. For our young students who are new to NewGate School, a Home Visit will be scheduled before school begins in August.

**Individual Learning Plans:** Individual Learning Plans set forth specific individualized educational goals for each student. Parents, teachers, and elementary school students mutually agree to consciously work toward completion of these goals over the next few months. The student's progress toward fulfilling his or her Individual Learning Plan will be a primary focus of subsequent conferences, progress reports, and student self-evaluations.

**Student Self-Evaluations:** Elementary and Secondary teachers will have their students prepare a self-evaluation of their progress during the reporting period just ended. The children will go over their self-evaluations with the teachers, who will add their comments and observations. Then the students will present their self-evaluations to their parents at the next family conference.

**Portfolios of Student Work:** Each Elementary student will also present a portfolio collection of his or her best work to her parents at the upcoming parent conference. At year's end, it will become a permanent record of the year. Portfolios will include a variety of students' work showing progress, growth, interests, and collaboration. Work samples may include drawings, stories, spelling words, essays, special reports, mathematical word problems and analysis, possibly accompanied by photos taken at school, teacher comments, and self-evaluations.

#### **7.4 Evaluations of Student Progress**

Our Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced. The teachers maintain careful records of each student's academic progress.

Because Montessori schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or to the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades until a student reaches the Secondary Level. Parents will receive student evaluations at the end of each semester reviewing your student's development and growth as well as how the Montessori program contributes to your student's growth.

#### **7.5 Standardized Tests**

We do not place a great deal of emphasis on standardized tests as a reliable measure of an individual student's progress. They are notoriously inaccurate, misleading, and stressful for children. After working with the same children for three years, carefully observing their work, our teachers come to know far more about their students' progress than is shown by a multiple-choice standardized test.

The issue is not testing, but we believe the tendency in many schools to teach to the test and the stress of frequent high stakes testing are misguided. We use tests as a feedback loop, at times indicating that a student needs a new lesson or more practice, rather than as a needless competition among students for grades.

Test-taking skills are just another practical life lesson that children need to master, and that is how we approach tests.

NewGate students take Scantron Performance Series Formative Assessment Tests in the beginning and end of the year from grades 1-7. Students grades 8-10 take the PSAT, and 11th and 12th grade students take the SAT. Students who choose to participate in the IB diploma program take the IB exams at the end of their senior year.

The Montessori approach de-emphasizes student comparisons. Children learn and develop in different ways and at different paces. There are many ways to measure student achievement, including oral and written testing, portfolios of work completed, observations, having students demonstrate their knowledge, or challenging them to debate an issue.

#### **7.6 Student Learner Outcomes**

Montessori is designed to allow for individualized student progress; however, as a college-preparatory school, NewGate has established expectations for achievement and proficiency across the curriculum that we expect as our students advance from one level of the school to the next. They represent a level of skill and knowledge that we expect most of our students to display before advancing to the next level.

The school stimulates and supports students in their pursuit of personal mastery of any given subject area(s). Students will normally be promoted at the end of the school year if they have accomplished the proficiency goals and norms that have been established.

Advancement to the next program (for example from the Primary to the Lower Elementary) is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional, and physical/motor development. Because the classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless of which group he or she is placed in, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. Normally, parents will work with us in reaching these decisions, and together we consider on what will be in the child's best interests.

## **7.7 Transcripts**

By written request, the parent/guardian, or, upon attaining 18 years of age, the student may ask that a photocopy of the student's file, along with completed recommendation forms, be issued to another school. Copies sent directly are marked "Official Transcript" and are noted in the file.

Secondary students work with the College Guidance Counselor to have their transcripts sent to colleges and universities of their choice during the college admissions process.

## **7.8 Privacy of Student Files**

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access.

Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least twenty-four hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a NewGate staff member. If a parent/guardian disagrees with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with relevant comments.

Officials of the State or County Health Department may have the right to view student files without the parents' or guardians' permission. However, with a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file without the permission of the student or parent/guardian, and the school will inform the student, and his or her family, in writing that such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent(s), guardian(s), or student if he or she has attained the age of 18, with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

## **8.0 Financial Policies**

### **8.1 Tuition Policies**

NewGate is a non-profit organization dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. Student accounts must be kept up to date. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

Families are responsible for prompt payment of all outstanding tuition and fees. Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has a past due outstanding balance on his/her account. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

All monies due under the Enrollment Agreement are due and payable according to the terms of the contract. No extensions or delays in payment will be recognized unless in writing and signed by an authorized agent of the school and one of the signatories.

## **8.2 Reenrollment**

Invitations to continue at NewGate are normally automatic but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the right match between the student, home, and school.

Reenrollment materials will be sent by email from TADS in early February and be submitted with the annual enrollment deposit by March 1st. If the school has not received a student's reenrollment, his or her space will be made available to new applicants.

No student may begin the next school year if there is an outstanding balance remaining on his/her account.

## **8.3 Financial Aid**

NewGate offers limited financial aid to families enrolled in the school. Parents may contact the Head of School, the Associate Head, or go to the school's website for more information. Financial aid applications are submitted online.

Financial aid decisions are based on the needs of the family for the upcoming year. If financial aid is needed for more than one year, the family must submit a new application each year. Applications can be made after winter break. Financial aid is defined as "a reduction in tuition granted to families that have a legitimate need determined by an objective and independent third-party assessment of their financial position."

### **Reasons for Offering Financial Aid**

NewGate believes that there is strength in diversity, including economic diversity.

Families who share the school's values and students who are doing well at school, or are promising candidates for admission, are worthy of support. We believe that all of society benefits from such investments.

### **Source of Funds**

Financial aid is funded primarily from the school's operating budget and is supplemented by various fundraising activities; therefore, receipt of this award is conditional.

### **Conditions of Financial Aid**

All financial aid will be awarded on a one-year basis. Families receiving financial aid cannot be guaranteed that it will be awarded in the following school year.

Awards of financial aid cover tuition only and do not include any fees for books and materials, special activities, supervision, or transportation.

Any awards of financial aid shall be credited to the individual student's account. Financial aid awards may not be given or transferred to any other student. Families that receive financial aid may elect any of the school's payment plans to pay the balance. They will be expected to pay the balance of their accounts on time and by the due date according to the payment plan selected.

Financial aid will not be renewed in any case where a family receiving aid fails to keep the balance of their account up to date.

Non-compliance with the aforementioned conditions will result in complete forfeiture of financial aid and will be reassessed to the individual student's account.

### **Applying for Financial Aid**

The first step in applying for financial aid is to formally apply for admission to the school or, for present students, to re-enroll for the upcoming school year. Any present or prospective parents who feel that they will need financial aid are invited to meet with the Head or Associate Head of School.

Once a student's application or re-enrollment agreement is accepted, families wishing to apply for financial aid may do so online through TADS.com, a national company that specializes in working with schools and college financial aid programs. Applications for financial aid are evaluated confidentially by TADS.

Applications for financial aid must be submitted no later than April 30<sup>th</sup> to be considered for the following year. Late applications will be considered if funds are still available.

It is the family's responsibility to ensure that all appropriate forms and supporting documents, such as tax returns, W-2s, 1099s, etc., are submitted by the required date, and to pay any processing fees required by the needs-analysis company.

Information submitted to TADS remains strictly confidential.

### **Priority in considering applications for Financial Aid will normally be given to:**

Families that have been with the school for several years and are seen as highly supportive of the school's goals;

Families that have made any special contributions to the life of the school;

Families that have an observed commitment to keeping their students at NewGate School.

For further information, please contact Tanya Ryskind at 941-922-4949 or [tanyaryskind@montessori.org](mailto:tanyaryskind@montessori.org).

## 9.0 Fundraising

NewGate School, Inc. is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization, holding approval as a 501(c)(3) corporation from the IRS. Voluntary contributions to NewGate School, where no goods or services are received in turn, are tax-deductible as defined in the IRS guidelines.

**NewGate School's Annual Fund** provides essential operating support for the school's budget. Unrestricted gifts to the Annual Fund are critical to the financial health of NewGate School. The school's budget is dependent upon these contributions to help close the gap between the true cost of a NewGate education and the revenue provided by tuition.

In addition to its financial impact, giving to the Annual Fund is a way of expressing confidence in, and support for, NewGate School. Participation by current parents, alumni, grandparents, and parents of alumni is essential to our school community.

### **The Spirit of Philanthropy: Why Give to NewGate School**

The act of giving to charitable causes is known as **philanthropy**. A **philanthropist** is a person who donates time, talent and treasure and takes action to support the common good. Perhaps the greatest benefit of philanthropy is that it creates a positive impact. It can bring about very important changes. These changes create positive life experiences for others.

Giving to NewGate is a great way to make a difference and create a positive life changing experience.

You probably have a dream about the extraordinary things your charitable gifts could accomplish now and for years to come. Partnering with NewGate is the way to convert that personal dream into practical reality. For more than 25 years, we have been successfully connecting parents', students' and staff dreams with our mission. The result is powerful!

Your support will allow us to define our future and prepare our students for their important part in tomorrow's exciting and unpredictable world.

**AFFIRMATION OF RECEIPT OF COPY OF THE PARENT HANDBOOK**

According to Florida Statutes, each family must sign and submit the following statement (which we process digitally through TADS):

I/We, \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ have received and read the NewGate School  
Parent Handbook, which includes the school's discipline policy and child abuse procedures.

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name Printed

Name Printed