

A light gray silhouette of a child standing on a wooden ladder, reaching up with their right hand towards a five-pointed star floating in the air. The child is wearing a long-sleeved shirt and shorts. The ladder has four rungs. The background is plain white.

***Little Star
Montessori School***

Parent Handbook

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Our Philosophy

Mission Statement:

Our school is dedicated to ensuring that children in the Methow Valley have the opportunity for a healthy and joyful early childhood education. Cultivating children's natural curiosity and creativity lies at the heart of our Montessori program. We encourage each child to develop as a whole person and acquire a life-long love of learning.

Dear Families,

Little Star Montessori School has been serving the children of the Methow Valley since 1982. Our school provides a rich learning environment that gives children the opportunity to develop self-esteem, healthy habits of communication, and their own unique creativity.

The Montessori Method considers the total human being - his/her physical, intellectual, social and spiritual needs. The mixed age grouping allows for rich social interaction; the older child finds a sense of accomplishment in helping a younger classmate, the little ones find role models and a sense of where they are headed by watching the older children. Social skills and confidence blossom.

The child's need to develop by exploring his or her environment is supported in the classroom by carefully designed materials and a teacher who guides the child's energy, interest and enthusiasm into self-enriching activities. Freedom within the prepared environment gives the children an opportunity to make their own decisions and discoveries and to grow at their own rate.

As our teacher-child ratio is small, we are able to give each child the individual attention s/he needs. Our curriculum includes life skills (such as grooming, housekeeping, and cooking), pre-reading/pre-math activities for Preschoolers and reading/math skills for Kinders, integrated with geography, history, science, music, creative movement, art, drama, and storytelling. Our environment stimulates the child's natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

Little Star gives the child the opportunity to make choices for developing creative, independent thinking as well as skills in group cooperation.

We believe that

Every child is special, therefore listened to with respect

Every child develops at his or her own pace and is accepted as a unique individual

Every child is curious, therefore encouraged to explore, to think creatively and to enjoy learning.

Parent participation is an important aspect of our program as children experience a sense of community and a feeling of enhanced personal worth when their parents take part in school activities. As part of our Little Star family, we want you to be involved.

Our chief interest is the self-esteem, education and welfare of your child. We feel it is important that you be fully informed about your child's needs and activities with us. We strive to maintain an open communication with our parents, which leads to a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation.

This information handbook is for your reference. It is a guide to our school policies. Please keep it on hand as you may wish to refer to it throughout the year.

Little Star Staff

STAFF

School Director

Nicole Ringgold
19 Sunflower Ln
Winthrop, WA 98862
997-0379
nicolelittlestar@centurytel.net

Office Administrator

Trudi Garing
48 Left Fork Wolf Creek Rd
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-2690
littlestar1@centurytel.net

Lead Kinder Teacher

Rayma Hayes
20 Dripping Springs Rd.
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-3404
rayma@methownet.com

Kinder Teacher

Baylie Peplow
509-341-4289
bayliep@hotmail.com

Lead Preschool Teacher

Sandy Welfelt
370 Wolf Creek Road
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-2610

Preschool Teacher

Anna Bonica
PO Box 176
Twisp, WA 98856
997-0496
riveranne3@hotmail.com

Lead Preschool Teacher

Kim Claussen
311 Twisp River Road
Twisp, WA 98856
997-8050

Preschool Teacher

Keri Miles
996-8240
keri@2blackdogs.com

Lead Toddler Teacher

Florence Sawyer
P.O. Box 862
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-8296

Toddler Teacher

Michelle Shaffer
70 Second Mile Rd
Twisp, WA 98856
997-2267
crux@methow.com

Toddler Teacher

Melissa Hickman
997-4124

Toddler Teacher

Lindsay Evans
996-2031

Lead Afternoon Teacher

Teresa Skye
996-3217

Afternoon Teacher

Celeste Roberts
996-8288

Substitutes

Nicole Price
996-4457
(509) 429-9724

Crystal Blum
996-2330

BOARD

PRESIDENT

Eveline Wathen
69 Lost River Rd.
Mazama, WA 98833
996-3629 ewathen02@yahoo.com

VICE PRESIDENT (interim)

Keri Miles
996-8240
keri@2blackdogs.com

SECRETARY

Ingrid Patterson
128 C Poorman Creek Rd.
Twisp, WA 98856
997-7030 eipat@mymethow.com

TREASURER

Julie Palm
PO Box 322
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-2884 palm@methownet.com

SCHOOL DIRECTOR

Nicole Ringgold
19 Sunflower Ln
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-8017 nicolelittleststar@centurytel.net

EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR

Rayma Hayes
20 Dripping Springs Rd.
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-3404 rayma@methownet.com

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Trudi Garing
48 Left Fork Wolf Creek Rd.
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-2690 littleststar1@centurytel.net

STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

Kim Claussen
311 Twisp River Rd.
Twisp, WA 98856
997-8050

FUNDRAISING

Mike Pruett
89A Left Fork Wolf Creek Rd.
Winthrop, WA 98862
mpruett@operamail.com

EVENT FUNDRAISING

Sara Crum
6 North Apple Way
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-3415
crumfamily@gmail.com

SCHOLARSHIP

Fran Kaul
PO Box 64
Winthrop, WA 98862
mistyfjord@methownet.com

INFRASTRUCTURE

Julie Grialou
18304 Hwy 20
Winthrop, WA 98862
996-8169
jgrialou@gmail.com

Tiffany Langdalen
Rt. 1 Box 400-7
Winthrop, WA 98862
tlangdalen@centurytel.net

Julie Wenzel
juliehaakenson@hotmail.com

Heidi Smith
997-7463
hsmith@karrosmith.com

HONORARY MEMBERS

Ardis Bynum
PO Box 725
Winthrop, WA 98862
ardis@methownet.com

Toddler Program

Age Level: 18 months - 3 years

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1:6

Program Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:30am—12:30pm

Location: Upstairs classroom, next to the office

Lead Teacher: Florence Sawyer

Assistant Teachers: Michelle Bosco & Melissa Hickman

Little Star's Toddler Program focuses on the most vital stage of your child's life: the beginning. Our program encourages individuality, creativity and a love of learning. We encourage self discipline in an environment rich in motivation and activities. The social interaction develops awareness of self and others through work and play.

Using sensorial materials and group activities, this age group incorporates basic Montessori teachings with practical life skills. Music, beginning art, puppetry and nature studies are also offered.

As Toddlers need consistency and a sense of belonging to truly thrive, we require a minimum two day enrollment for this program. We have found that those Toddlers attending only one day per week have a more difficult time making the adjustment from mom and dad to teachers and friends. Toddlers are given a snack, which is provided by the parents on a rotating basis. Parents are also asked to pack their child a nutritious lunch, diapers (if needed) and an extra set of clothes.

Toddler Daily Routine

8:30-9:30	Children arrive. Stories, creative play, individual and group activities
9:30-9:45	Snack
9:45-10:00	Potty time, diaper changes
10:00-11:00	Art projects, circle, and music time, individual and group activities.
11:11-11:45	Outside play
11:45-12:15	Hand washing and lunch
12:15-12:30	Clean-up and goodbyes

Preschool Program

Age Level: 3 - 5 years

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1:8

Program Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:30am—1:00pm

Location: Downstairs

Lead Teachers: Sandy Welfelt & Kim Claussen

Assistant Teachers: Anna Bonica & Keri Miles

The Montessori method nurtures the whole personality of the child, not merely his intellectual faculties, which includes the power of deliberation, initiative, and independent choice. The child is encouraged to participate as a member of a real social community, our school. The child learns fundamental social skills which form the basis of good citizenship.

Children are introduced to phonetic reading and beginning math skills integrated with art, drama, science, geography, puppetry and storytelling. Creative movement, Spanish and field trips are also included in this program.

Through the use of Montessori materials, children learn and grow at their own rate and according to their own interests. The children develop independence and responsibility as they acquire valuable social, perceptual, intellectual and physical skills. Our open classroom environment provides a challenging and stimulating experience and fosters great joy in learning as the children make their own choices and discoveries.

This year, we have two Preschool classrooms. Our Preschool classrooms have open door policies, so children are free to flow back and forth throughout the day. Both will hold the same daily schedule.

Preschool daily schedule

- 8:30-10:00 Children arrive. Free time (toys, art project, practical life materials).
- 10:00-10:15 Circle time, snack, sharing & singing
- 10:15-11:00 Recess
- 11:00-12:00 Challenging work time: math, language, and sensorial materials.
- 12:00-12:30 Lunch
- 12:30-1:00 Clean-up and recess.

Kindergarten Program

Age Level: 5 - 6 years

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1: 8

Kindergarten: Monday - Thursday, 8:30am—1:00pm

Location: Upstairs

Lead Teacher: Rayma Hayes

Assistant Teacher: Baylie Peplow

Our Kindergarten Program prepares the child to move into elementary level education with the strong social academic skills necessary for successful learning. Our flexible structure allows the child to work with materials from Preschool through elementary according to his/her interests and capabilities. Our environment offers challenging and stimulating materials to aid and direct academic, artistic and social growth. Our classroom is prepared to strengthen the child's ability to evaluate, which enables him/her to make constructive decisions. Decision making is considered the highest function of the human mind. Building self-esteem and learning how to cooperate in a group environment are key goals.

Everything the child has learned and experienced in her/his first four years of life is elaborated upon in the Kindergarten year. Language arts are expanded through a study of literature while math skills will be reinforced in science class, cooking, or woodworking. Learning takes place as a unity of activity and thought. Art, music, creative dance, yoga, drama and stories from around the world emphasize multi-cultural awareness.

Kinder daily routine

8:30 –9:00	Children arrive, Free activity time.
9:00- 9:30	Circle time (group lessons, sharing, singing)
9:30-10:45	Snack is served—children help themselves throughout the morning.
9:30-10:45	Challenging work time.
10:45-11:15	Outside play.
11:15-12:00	Stories, drama, puppets, art, quiet work time.
12:00-12:30	Lunch.
12:30-1:00	Clean-up, recess/play time.

Afternoon Program

Age Level: Preschool and Kindergarten

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1:10

Location: Upstairs

Program Hours: Monday - Thursday, 1:00pm—3:30pm

Location: Upstairs in the Toddler Room

Teaches: Teresa Skye & Celeste Roberts

Our Afternoon Program is a relaxing, fun way for students to complete their day. Depending on the season, outdoor activities might include going on nature walks to the river, a stroll downtown, or a visit to the horses. In the schoolyard the children love to play sports such as soccer, baseball and basketball. The children also enjoy playing in the sandbox or riding the bikes and tricycles around the path. On warm days the children put on their swimsuits and play in the sprinklers.

Inside, the children play board games, create fantastic structures with building materials, engage in art and cooking projects, or choose some interesting books. Every Afternoon there is a quiet time when the children meet in a circle and stretch, sing, listen to a story and relax on a mat. Snack is provided before the 3:30 pick up time.

The Afternoon program begins at 1:00pm. Parents may choose a set program time (i.e. 1:00pm - 3:30pm or 1:00pm-2:30pm) or to use our additional hour program when the need for additional care arises. Because the Afternoon program tends to fill up, and we cannot accept more than 20 students each day, we require that you add your child to the Afternoon sign in sheet before 12:00pm that day.

Afternoon routine

1:00-2:00	Outside play
2:00-2:30	Story time and quiet free play
2:30-3:00	Project of the day
3:00-3:15	Snack
3:15-3:30	Clean-up



***Policies
&
Procedures***

ALLERGIES:

Make sure we are aware of any allergies your child may have. We are especially concerned about food allergies, since snack is brought to school on a rotating basis by parents.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES:

All programs start at 8:30am. All students *must* be accompanied by an adult and signed **in** and **out** on the attendance sheet with full signature. Those students riding the public school bus will be met by a staff member at the door and checked in.

The Toddler program begins at 8:30am and ends at 12:30pm. If you have another child in the Preschool or Kinder program who is here until 1:00pm, arrangements can be made to pick your child up at 12:45. It is important that you are prompt, as the little ones get very tired and the Afternoon program begins at 1:00pm in the upstairs classroom. In addition, teachers cannot leave or begin their next-day prep until all children are picked up.

Little Star Preschool and Kindergarten students begin their class time at 8:30am and end at 1:00pm unless they are in the Afternoon program.

Little Star offers an Afternoon program from 1:00pm until 3:30pm for Preschool and Kindergarten children who would like to stay later in the day. Students may either be enrolled in the Afternoon program or signed up on a day by day basis.

If Toddlers are at school after 12:45pm, you will be charged an initial late fee of \$10.00 and an additional \$5.00 for every 15 minutes thereafter. If your Preschool or Kindergarten child is at school after 1:15pm (s)he will be added to our Afternoon roster, and you will be charged a late fee of \$10.00. The Afternoon Program has a 1 hour minimum charge. After the first hour, the Afternoon Program is billed in 15 minute increments.

All children must be picked up by 3:30pm at the latest. An initial late fee of \$10.00 for any arrival after 3:30pm and an additional fee of \$5.00 for every 15 minutes will be charged for those arriving thereafter. If you anticipate a late arrival, please call the Little Star office.

If someone else is picking up your child after school, it is necessary that you notify the office in writing, unless you have provided prior permission in your file. In which case, we ask that you notify us in person or by phone. We cannot release your child to anyone other than you unless we are notified by you in writing. Please do not ask a grandparent, neighbor, friend or anyone else to notify us of a pick-up change; we will not allow any changes unless they are authorized by you.

Please be consistent about signing your child in and out at the end of the school day. Please use your legal name when signing your child out. This is a state requirement and is for your child's protection.

BIRTHDAYS:

We celebrate all birthdays with a special “circle of life.” We tell the “story” of the child’s life. It is fun to bring in photos of your child to include in our “story.” Although we would love to celebrate each individual birthday with treats, with the number of birthdays to celebrate each month, it unfortunately adds too much sugar to our childrens’ diet. If you choose to bring in treats for your child’s birthday, healthy treats (i.e. muffins instead of cupcakes) are strongly encouraged.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Little Star Montessori School is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of community representatives and staff members. Parents and other community members who are interested in serving on the Board should contact the Board President. Little Star’s Board of Directors meets monthly to discuss the overall well-being of the school. Each year the board will decide which day, time, and place to hold the meetings. The board helps organize event fundraisers, building maintenance, scholarship, and finances. Little Star will post notice of openings on the parent information board as they occur, or you may contact the office if you are interested.

CALENDAR:

Little Star School will generally follow the public school calendar. You will receive a calendar at the beginning of the year which will give more detailed information about our schedule. You will also receive monthly calendars detailing events, field trips, bike days, celebrations, etc. All of these can also be found on our web site.

CHANGING PROGRAM MID-YEAR

Little Star’s philosophy is to follow the natural development of your child. This is the one time in their lives that children can be free-spirited, so it is important not to rush them through our programs. It is especially important that we seriously consider the impact it may have on children if we pull them away from the connections they have developed in their classrooms. However, in some instances, it may be apparent that your child is ready to transition into the next program. In this case, please communicate your concerns with the Office. We will share your concerns with the appropriate teachers, and encourage you to spend some time in each classroom with your child. If you still feel strongly that your child should transition, complete a Change of Program form and turn it into the Office. Thereafter, we will pull together a meeting involving the parent(s), teachers from both classrooms, and School Director. Together, we will discuss the situation to determine the best outcome for your child.

CHILD ABUSE:

The school shall implement procedures to insure that existing public laws regarding child abuse are followed.

CONFERENCES:

Toddler, Preschool and Kindergarten parent conferences are set up twice a year in November and May. These conferences are intended to give the teachers the opportunity to share your child's academic and social progress.

Please do not discuss your child's progress with the staff during school hours or without an appointment. This does not facilitate good communication concerning your child. If you have specific concerns or there has been a change or crisis in your family, we encourage you to set up a conference appointment as soon as possible. Good communication between our staff and parents is essential to our program.

CUBBIES FOR CHILDREN:

Each child will have a cubby in his/her classroom. Toddlers have two sets of cubbies; one in the classroom for jackets, shoes, extra clothing and lunches, and the other in the bathroom hallway for their art projects. Preschoolers and Kinders all have one set of cubbies located in their classrooms. Please remember to occasionally check and empty the cubbies.

CUBBIES FOR PARENTS:

Each family has a Parent Cubby in the main entry area. Tuition invoices will be placed in the cubbies on the 5th of each month.

DRESS:

Dress your child in comfortable play clothes and shoes. Please leave a change of clothes in your child's cubby in case of accidents, lunch spills, mud puddles etc. As the weather gets colder, children will need warm coats, boots with traction, and mittens. We cannot let your children play outside without appropriate winter clothing. ***Please label all items clearly with your child's name.*** Lost items will be placed outside the front door.

EXTENDED ABSENCES/VACATIONS:

If a family vacation or extended illness is two weeks or longer the family has two options:

- [1] Continue to pay tuition installments to secure your child's scheduled days.
- [2] Give two weeks written notice (*not applicable for illness*) and withdraw your child. When your child returns, choose from the days that are available, or be added to the waitlist until additional days are available.

FIELD TRIPS:

We often take field trips to local places. We alternate field trip days to ensure all children have equal opportunity to attend. Field trip dates and destinations will generally be included in our monthly calendars, and/or posted at the school and on our web site, unless they are spontaneous adventures. Occasionally, the school needs transportation assistance on these outings. We depend on our parents to help us with

transportation for our field trips. We require that drivers be licensed, insured for liability and have workable seat belts in their vehicles. When a field trip is planned, the maximum adult to child ratio will be 1:8. Portable first aid kits, including each child's emergency information, will accompany each teacher.

FINANCIAL AID:

Little Star maintains a scholarship fund to assist families with economic hardships to enroll their child(ren) in our early childhood programs. Please contact the school office for information and an application. All information is confidential.

ILLNESS:

If your child is ill, please keep him/her at home and call us to let us know. If your child becomes ill at school, we will notify you immediately and let your child rest until you arrive. In case of an emergency, you will be notified. Please make sure you leave us with numbers where you can be reached during the day. If there are any changes in your phone numbers or contact information, please fill out a change of address form available at the office. **IF YOUR CHILD HAS VOMITED, HAD DIARRHEA OR A FEVER IN THE PAST 24 HOURS, DO NOT SEND HIM/HER TO SCHOOL.** In the hopes that this policy is respected, we allow each child three make-up days for absences due to illness.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

For attendance at Little Star School, Washington State Law requires that all children **MUST** be immunized appropriate to age, in the process of receiving immunizations, or exempt from immunizations. Please provide the school with a completed Certificate of Immunization Status form. Forms are available in the office. Please update your child's immunization form as needed **OR** the school must have on file the parent's signature showing exemption.

LUNCH:

Provide your child with a hearty, nutritious lunch in a lunch box. **Please write** your child's name on the lunch box and other containers. We request that you remember our **no sugar or junk food** policy in preparing lunch.

MAKE-UP DAYS:

Each child is allowed **three** make-up days for absences due to illness. We ask that you call in advance to make sure there is space available on the day you choose to use as a make-up day. When using a make-up day, be sure you write **make-up** on the sign in/out sheet so that you are not billed. Parents whose children are enrolled in school on holidays or snow days may also make up those missed days.

MEDICATION:

When a student is in need of any medication at school, a written note (signed and dated) from the student's parent/guardian is required with the following information

Student's name
Name of medication
Prescription number
Dosage of medication, and
Time(s) to be taken

The medication must be delivered to the school office by the parent/guardian in the original container with the student's name and dosage. Medication may be administered by your child's teacher.

In Spring and Summer, bring your child to school with sun lotion already applied. Washington State Law will not allow us to apply sunscreen without a signed medical release form.

PARENT ORIENTATION:

At the beginning of the school year we schedule a Parent Orientation in each classroom. This is a great opportunity to meet teachers and parents and ask questions about the school and school policies. New families are strongly encouraged to attend this evening.

PARENT PARTICIPATION:

Little Star requires 25 hours of parent participation per family per year, September through June, thereby giving all the parents responsibility for helping maintain and improve our school. Participation may be filled one hour at a time, or for the entire year if parents are involved in fundraising and other long-term needs. Although it defeats the purpose of integrating with the Little Star community and helping us to meet our goals, parents may opt to pay a one-time fee of \$400 in lieu of participating. Additional participation hours are not carried over to the next school year.

If you have questions about how you can become involved, you can either stop by the office or view the online list of parent participation duties that we have posted on our website and on the entryway bulletin board. You will also receive updated task lists published in our newsletters. There is never a shortage of tasks to complete.

PETS:

Please obtain permission from the Little Star Office before you bring your pet to school. If your child would like to share a pet with his/her classroom, it is important to obtain permission from the other children in case some have allergies or fears.

Pets cannot be left unattended or unleashed on Little Star's entryway porch. Please be sure to secure your pet before entering the building.

Each classroom at Little Star has at least one pet. As part of our curriculum we teach children how to care and treat pets. This year the pets are:

	Type of Pet	Environment
Toddler Class	<u>Fish</u>	<u>Fish tank</u>
	<u>Birds</u>	<u>Bird cage</u>
Preschool Class	<u>Fish</u>	<u>Fish tank</u>
Kinder Class	<u>Bird</u>	<u>Bird cage</u>

All pets are contained in in their area and are not touched by the children. Parents will be informed by mail if other pets are brought into the school to stay for over 24 hours.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY:

Playground rules are reviewed on an ongoing basis with the children, stressing safety, and must be enforced by the supervising teachers. If your child is on the playground when you come pick him/her up, please help us enforce our rules. Playground Rules include the following:

1. Respect for Others:

- Play safely. Avoid pushing, tackling games, wrestling, kicking, fighting, blocking others' activities, and throwing snow, ice, sand, wood chips, stones, equipment, etc.
- Be aware. Don't interrupt others' games; look before you leap; watch out for children who are smaller or younger than you are; watch where you are going; wait for others to finish their turn at something before you take yours. Include other people in your games and other people's ideas during a game.
- Follow the rules. If you have a problem or a complaint that you cannot resolve for yourself or with the help of an arbiter, seek out an adult on duty for guidance. Listen to and follow the adult's recommendations.

2. Respect for Property:

- Use all playground materials, tools and equipment as they are intended.
- Stay within the fenced play yard at all times unless you have a specific instruction from the adult on duty to leave; avoid bouncing off of and climbing on the fence.
- Unless you are gardening, avoid digging in, pulling on, picking at, breaking off or hanging from the vegetation.

3. Respect for Self:

- Wear weather-appropriate clothing at all time.
- Play safely and fairly, and make play time fun.
- Talk to your teacher about resolving ongoing problems that you see.

REFUNDS:

No refunds will be given on your registration fee nor your initial 10% tuition payment. A two week **written** notice must be given for withdrawals if a refund of unused tuition is desired. This is necessary because our staffing is geared to enrollment. Full charges will continue until two weeks after notice is given. Written requests should be dated and can be mailed or put in the tuition box near the office window.

SCHEDULE CHANGES:

When you register your child, please choose your days carefully! We realize that some changes may be necessary throughout the year, so we will work with you as much as possible in case a change of schedule is needed. A \$10.00 schedule change fee will be administered following a one time per school year schedule change allowance. All schedule changes must be handled through the office. To do so, fill out a Change of Program Form, available in the school entryway, as well as on our website.

SHARING:

We have sharing time during our circle (gathering) every day. The children are encouraged to share items from nature or that illustrate an experience they have had. The children are particularly fond of this activity and each would love to share every day. In order to be fair and accomplish other tasks in the day, each child's sharing day coincides with their **snack day**. Please leave personal toys at home as they often times get lost, broken and inevitably cause problems. If your child has a special blanket, stuffed animal or other comfort item which is difficult to part with, s/he can bring it and leave it in their cubby.

SNACK:

Each day our parents provide snack on a rotating basis for the program in which your child is enrolled. You will be given a monthly snack calendar to remind you of your upcoming snack, which is also available on our website. Each child anxiously anticipates his/her snack day as this is also his/her sharing day. For parents who forget or are unable to provide snack on their scheduled day, we ask that you **please** provide a shelf item for our reserve. Please bring the snack to school fully prepared. We have a LOW SUGAR policy for snack and lunch. The snack should consist of two nutritious items such as muffins, fruit bread, fruits, vegetables, cheese and crackers, or a combination. Our "no sugar" policy is relaxed for birthdays and other special occasions. When parents forget snacks, Little Star must front the cost of snack for the entire classroom that day. Therefore, if you forget your snack, a \$10 per child fee will automatically be added to your next bill.

SUGGESTION BOX:

A wooden suggestion box is placed in the front entrance of our school. We welcome you to share any concerns, ideas, or comments you might have verbally or in writing. New and fresh ideas from parents are what make this school so great! This box can

also be used to pay your tuition.

TUITION:

Tuition is based on an annual rate. The annual tuition is divided into ten equal installments. The initial non-refundable payment is due on July 15, which covers tuition for June 2010. The remaining nine payments will be due on the 15th of each month and past due on the 20th of the same month. **Payments received after the 15th will be charged a \$10.00 late fee.** Each family will be given an invoice in their parent cubby before the 5th of each month. We understand that occasionally unforeseen circumstances arise. If your family is experiencing hardship, or if your family has seasonal income, please do not assume that we already know your situation. Don't hesitate to call the office so that a payment plan can be arranged. If tuition is delinquent more than two months in a row, the Board of Directors will send notice of an overdue tuition account and establish a tuition agreement policy with the family. Little Star Montessori School operates on a very tight budget and cannot allow students to remain in attendance with past due tuition accounts. There is a tuition box near the office window to drop off tuition payments or suggestions. We encourage your comments and suggestions regarding the school and our programs.

VIDEOS:

Little Star is committed to outdoor activity and an active part of our philosophy is to minimize the use of television-type activities. Although we do not have a television, VCR or DVD player on the school premises, we use educational-style videos occasionally (normally in conjunction with a guest presenter) which are previewed ahead of time. We are always with the children during viewing time.

VISITORS/ADDITIONAL DAYS:

If your child has a guest or relative visiting, we welcome him/her to join our classroom. The first visit of prospective students is complimentary. Please notify the office at least one day in advance if a guest would like to visit our school. Additional days needed for an enrolled student should also be arranged a minimum of one day in advance. An hourly charge will be assessed for additional days. ***Payment for the visitor charge is due on the date of attendance.***

WEAPONS:

Little Star has a no weapon policy. A weapon is defined as any dangerous instrument. We ask that children not bring real or play weapons to Little Star School.