



# BILINGUAL MONTESSORI LAB ACADEMY



## 2022-23 PARENT HANDBOOK





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# BILINGUAL MONTESSORI LAB ACADEMY WELCOME



**Claudia Medina**  
Founder

Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy is a non-profit early childhood program educating children ages 3 to 7 years old. Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy uses the curriculum and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori in a child-centered approach to education.

The Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy was founded by Claudia and Rosalio Medina in 2018. Claudia is a veteran 30-year+ Montessori teacher and teacher trainer in both AMI and AMS education. Natives of Colombia and Nicaragua, we are committed to bilingual education. We were inspired by Maria Montessori's experience in India where refugee children were observed absorbing and acquiring language to assist their parents. She found how children could grow and learn equally in many languages and encouraged schools around the world to provide dual language programs.

Claudia is a faculty member at Duhovka Institute in Europe, Princeton Montessori, and has been Curriculum Coordinator at several Montessori schools throughout the Chicagoland area. She has taught and trained bilingual teachers for 20+ years and has successfully developed language immersion programs for other Montessori schools. Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy was born after experiencing the beauty of Spanish immersion and English Immersion in Colombia. It's been years of planning and putting together our own authentic Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission at Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy is to provide a whole child experience for our Montessori program in Spanish and English, which considers the emotional, intellectual, physical, and social development of the child. We will address and identify the uniqueness of each child in a nurturing, emotionally secure and academically excellent bilingual environment.

At BMLA, we create a warm and enriching early childhood environment which promotes love of learning.

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# PHILOSOPHY & PROGRAM GOALS

Our school was founded on the premise that all children can learn and be bilingual. They all start off with great potential in life and with tremendous interest in learning. The children at Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy learn through the Montessori Philosophy, which develops hands-on experiences with an emphasis on practical life skills, the use of their senses, and individualized work in Spanish and English.

Our well-trained staff helps them overcome any learning barriers and turn them into strengths. Our purpose is to give students the ability to learn in an enriched environment that encourages learning and sets the child free to observe, think, create, and draw their conclusions in both languages.



## STRUCTURE

We will soon be starting a Toddler program and currently have a Primary 3 - 6 year academic program where we will include first grade to follow the AMI model set by Maria Montessori.

## HOURS

**Monday through Friday (except holidays and closures)**

**8:00am - 3:15pm - Montessori Full day Program**

**3:30pm - 5:30pm - Extended Day**

## ATTENDANCE

**As a school, we ask that all children arrive by 8:00 am; this allows them to take part in opening activities for the day with the rest of their class. It is very disruptive for the classroom if a child arrives late in the day. Please arrange any late arrivals with your teacher in advance.**

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# AN OVERVIEW OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

As a Montessori school, we use the philosophy developed by Dr. Maria Montessori to help children develop their fullest potential. We want to educate the whole child, meaning we promote growth in all areas of a child's development: academic, social, emotional, and physical. A key to the Montessori Method is the belief that every child has an inner desire to learn, and we work to cultivate that desire so that each child has a true joy in learning and a lifelong interest to do so. Montessori is a method of education that is personalized to each child's learning style, stage of development, and interests. Children develop complete academic and well-being foundations through hands-on experience, real-world application, and problem-solving.

Montessori is a method of education that was developed by Doctor Maria Montessori. It's worldwide and has proven successful for more than 100 years. It offers a broad view of education as an aid and a preparation for life. Maria Montessori started her career as a Doctor; however, through her work with underprivileged children, she moved from medicine to education. She used her training as a scientist to observe how children learn and applied this to develop a better way to educate children with astounding results.

In 1907, Doctor Maria Montessori opened her first Casa Dei Bambini' or 'Children's House' for young children who weren't old enough to attend school. Within one year of applying her new method of education, many of her students were able to read, write, and do basic mathematics. News of her success spread across Europe, and the Montessori Method, as it came to be known, took off worldwide.

The role of the Montessori educator within this space is to observe what children are drawn to and introduce them to the materials that link to those interests, so learning is always purposeful and engaging, this is why Montessori works. It recognizes that children learn in different ways, and at different paces, and Montessori meets them where they're at. It provides children with a learning environment where they have respect, independence, and the freedom to direct their own learning experience. This results in high levels of motivation to learn, and children who love learning, naturally apply themselves and do well.

## A CHILD'S WORK

The child does work in the classroom; the word "work" is used, as opposed to play, as every activity the child does has a specific purpose that facilitates growth, development, and education. All activities are guided by grace and courtesy to learn and develop a key sense of social-emotional learning and respect. Children learn basic care and independence by hand-washing, potty-training, and learning to dress in Language, Math, and Science. All work in the classroom is important and supports the whole child to become the best expression of themselves.

Another reason we call it to work is that it offers the child self-validation for a job well done. We also strive to make the activities as close to real-world experiences as possible; for example, a lesson on food will usually include preparing, cutting, and eating real food as well as cleaning up.

The Montessori environment is self-directed and guided by the child's sensitive periods. This provides children the opportunity to learn through their own experiences and at their own pace. Individualized lessons and repetition are key to the learning process, so a child is given the opportunity to do a work or activity as many times as they would like. Their strong interest shows us that a particular activity is just right for them developmentally and that they are in the process of perfecting their skills. While adults usually do something for the end product, children enjoy the actual doing and the process more than the completion. For example, a child will work very hard to polish a mirror until it shines beautifully; an adult may come along and attempt to put the mirror away, but the child may just begin the polishing process all over again! They may choose to repeat an activity over and over, not for the product, but to joyfully engage in and to master the process. We value process over product in a child's development.

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## INDEPENDENCE AND MONTESSORI

An important goal in a Montessori program is the teaching of independence. The classroom is put together in a way that promotes children doing activities on their own. A lot of the earlier learning in the classroom is focused on teaching independent action and helping the child to see repeatedly that they can do things on their own. Work in a Montessori classroom is also set up to be self-correcting, or explorative. A child will likely observe if the work needs to be corrected, or if a new lesson is needed. This takes out the need for teacher correction and makes an activity a positive experience by reinforcing the idea that they are completely capable of figuring things out.

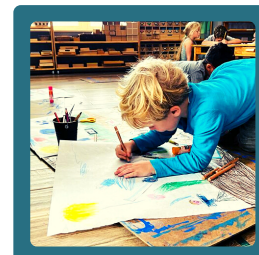
A child in a Montessori program stays for a three-year cycle, from around ages 3 to 6. Now, the reason for this is that while children get a lot out of the academic materials, they also learn just as much from having social interactions and relationships. The multi-aged classroom gives a much better overall sense of community and more closely simulates real life.

A new 3-year-old will come into the program and watch how the older children talk and conduct themselves and will learn from this. The older children, having been in the classroom for a couple of years, now know many of the lessons and activities, have mastered practical life skills, and are usually very well-mannered and courteous. They have also learned about community, caring for the environment, and helping others, and thus are invited to help teach the younger students. They are also given the responsibility of being a leader in the classroom. This is done both by their positive role modeling and by giving younger students lessons on how to properly do some of the work.

We currently have First grade in our Primary classroom, providing a full academic opportunity for our children, mostly mentoring and the leadership skills that allow the students to thrive.

## MULTIAGED CLASSROOMS

One of the more widely known features of Montessori education is that of the multi-age classroom. This rejects the notion that all children of the same age develop and progress on the same page, Montessori schools believe multi-age classrooms enable children to work more productively at their natural pace. Montessori classrooms are typically set up in 3-year age ranges. Advocates believe this enables children to learn better social skills and to develop academically, in a cooperative, non-competitive learning environment. Older students have the chance to become mentors to their younger classmates while learning and practicing important leadership skills. Younger children naturally look up to and emulate older children, and so in a classroom with a range of ages, there are always opportunities for a child to “graduate” from observer to leader. Older students also find great joy in being trusted to teach their younger peers. It’s also a way for older students to build patience and empathy, as they learn how to help others by sharing expertise with tasks that they themselves have mastered. To teach something, you must first have that mastery. The process of passing it on — teaching by example, communicating effectively, reminding oneself of the specific steps, and seeing how to correct mistakes — reinforces that mastery. By helping younger students, older students further learn their work and they learn the foundations and pleasures of taking responsibility and being appreciated.



# RESPECT FOR THE CHILD

At the Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy, we have a bilingual child-centered environment, with a warm, loving, and secure family-like atmosphere. Self-esteem and respect are the foundation of your child's future. Through repeated experiences of personal success and self-awareness, each child's abilities and independence grow.

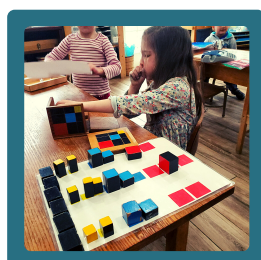
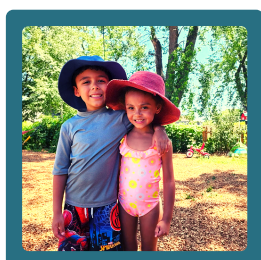
Being a part of a Montessori classroom is more than just academics, there is a social aspect to the classroom that is just as important. Children in a Montessori classroom learn to be a part of a community, where getting along with others is extremely important. Montessori teachers reinforce the values of kindness and respect every day by modeling appropriate behaviors and through lessons in grace and courtesy.

Kindness is taught in the Montessori classroom step by step through a gentle hug to a friend, a smile, a nice compliment, giving a friend a push on a swing, tying a friend's shoe, or helping a friend up when they have fallen. The goal is for the children to spread love and kindness in the environment.

The secret to kindness is when it is modeled and taught with passion and purpose. When we help and encourage our children to put kindness into action through thoughts, words, and deeds, the world will truly be a more peaceful and gentler place to live.

A Montessori classroom environment is kept quiet so as to not disturb the children at work. Our work time is called Organized Chaos. We teach respect and we expect the children to keep their environment clean. With this in mind, we ask parents to help us uphold this policy at all times when in the school. Please ask your child to clean up their space before leaving the school. When entering, we ask that we are quiet and respectful to the other children. We ask all parents and children to wash their hands when entering the classroom. We respect our environment; please do not set children on furniture such as tables and bookshelves and remember to not sit on the furniture yourself. Any diapering or clothing changes must be done in the bathroom.

A key component in our Montessori classroom is respect. We discuss expectations to promote kindness and respect with the children. They are expected to respect the teacher, respect the materials, respect friends, and respect themselves. The best way for our teachers to assist children in learning these concepts is to provide them with a clear understanding of the importance of respect and to educate them through communication by using our words, positive actions, and always modeling respect for others. Respect is taught to children in the classroom and it is found in the day-to-day practices of the children. Children learn what they experience, not what they are told to do.



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# BILINGUAL MONTESSORI LAB ACADEMY

## APPLICATION INFORMATION

*In order to ensure placement of a child at the Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy, an application for enrollment must be accompanied by a \$150 non-refundable application fee. Upon acceptance, a non-refundable tuition deposit of \$500 and a Parent Contract is required before the child may begin class.*

- **HEALTH FORMS** are required :

- For all new students

- Every two years in Primary

- Upon entering 3rd Year Children's House (Five Year Old physical)

*(Note: the State of Illinois now requires a diabetes screening for all children.)*

- **DENTAL FORMS** are required for all children in kindergarten (Third Year Primary or Kindergarten year), second grade and sixth grade.

- **VISION FORMS** are required for all children in kindergarten, students who have never been to school before or students from out of state or out of the country.

- **BIRTH CERTIFICATE** Please provide an original copy of the child's certified birth certificate. We will photocopy it and return the original to you.

## SUMMER CAMP

BMLA offers an exciting summer program. Children enrolled for the next school year are given preference for admittance to the summer program since we are a year long school. We do have some openings for summer program.

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# ADMISSIONS

1. Inquire | 2. Come Visit | 3. Apply

Children presently enrolled have first priority for the upcoming year. The next priority is younger siblings of currently enrolled children. Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy accepts applications throughout the year. Although most children enroll for September, the personalized nature of our program allows qualified students to enroll at any time. Admission is based on the availability of space and determination by the administration and staff that a child will benefit from our program and environment.

**1. Inquire about our school!** You can fill out an application to provide basic information about your child and the timing you are considering.

**2. Come visit us!** After you inquire, we will reach out to schedule a tour. During our tour, you will discover our history, learn about Montessori at BMLA, explore our campus, and see our students and teachers in action. After our tour, we will give you an informational folder containing a paper application and we will also email you an electronic copy. We look forward to meeting you!

**3. Submit an Application!** Use the link on our website [www.bimontlab.com](http://www.bimontlab.com) to fill out an application. There is an application fee of \$150 collected when the application is submitted. Upon receiving your completed application and fee (one per child, please), we will add your child to our waiting list. As a Montessori school that maintains multi-age classrooms, we employ a waiting list that helps us create an optimal balance of age, gender, and schedule. A spot could become available at any time during the year as we have rolling admissions.

*We strive to develop respect for all life in a multi-racial, non-sexist, cooperative, and calm setting. Our curriculum encompasses a host of developmentally appropriate experiences for all children including science, language, art, math, cooking, music, dance, drama, etc.*



## ENROLLMENT

BMLA. accepts enrollment year round. But because our school has a waiting list, you are welcome to reserve your spot on our waiting list at any time - simply contact us to fill out a couple of forms and pay a non-refundable waiting list fee of **\$500**.

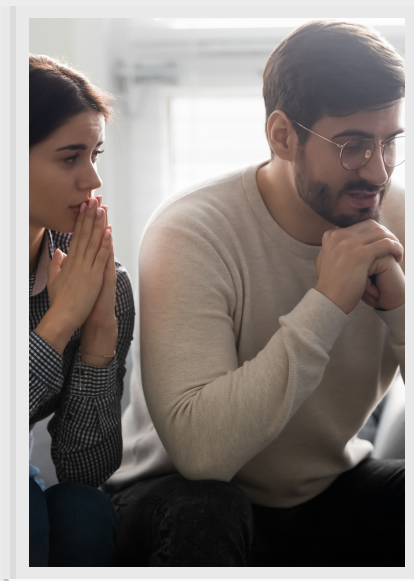
Once an opening becomes available, we will invite you and your child in for a visit and assessment. After your application is reviewed, the administration and prospective parents will be able to discuss enrollment options, placement, and starting dates for your child upon signing and receiving your parent contract.

## PROBATION / WITHDRAWAL

The purpose of the initial 60-day probationary period is to give both the school and the family an opportunity to ensure that our learning environment provides the best fit for a particular child; sometimes it takes a few days, sometimes a few weeks, to make this determination.

If for any reason within this time frame, either the family or staff consider that our school is not ideally suited to meet a child's needs, the 60-day period provides an acceptable and mutually understood way to make this known and discontinue the process of more permanent enrollment. If at any time you feel you need to adjust the schedule or withdraw, we welcome your communication.

Parents are expected to notify, as per the contract, in advance if their child will be departing from our program. If a parent withdraws their child from our program at the end of the month without a 30-day notice, they will be responsible for the following month's tuition.



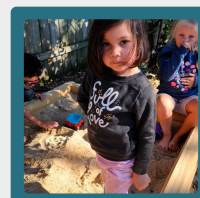
## TUITION

As a full-year Montessori School, we provide service to your family from September to August. Tuition is based on a full year divided into 12 equal monthly payments. Thus, there is **no reduction in tuition** for months that have vacations and holidays (i.e., winter break). Tuition is set each year and established in your yearly contract and published separately and there may be annual increases each September.

Those families on a full-time schedule and paying full tuition, with two or more children in the program will receive a 5% tuition reduction.

One month's advance tuition payment is due upon enrollment and the annual materials fee of \$250. Monthly tuition payment is due between the 1st and 5th of each month. If payment is received after the 5th of the month, there is a late charge of \$80.

We are not able to give refunds or "make up time" for absences. If you are interested in your child attending extra days or hours beyond what is listed in your tuition contract, please communicate with the Preschool Administrator to schedule this in advance.



## STUDENT CONDUCT



Our Behavior goals are meant to create Global Citizenship. Our Goals are to will work in partnership with parents to develop independent-thinking children who:

- Respect themselves and others
- Feel a sense of belonging
- Contribute to their community
- Accept and include diverse people
- Solve problems peacefully
- Use Spanish verbal and literacy fluency

**Philosophy:** We strive to provide a safe and secure environment for the entire school community. We promote a child's right to develop an individual through making mistakes and learning from them. Our discipline policies are not designed to punish the child, but rather to help the child grow into a respectful and responsible individual who is capable of making the best decisions.

### Methods:

We will prepare a child-centered, calm and interesting environment with child-centered activities. We will always respect the child but be firm in the redirection. We will model and actively teach social skills: how to share, take turns, ask for things, communicate, etc. Children will learn to solve problems through respectful discussion and negotiation. We will give the children appropriate positive attention for positive behavior. We will never inflict pain, humiliate, frighten or shame any child.

### Intervention:

Whenever a child continues to hurt others, destroy property, or disrupt opportunities to learn and play, we will conference with the parents to cooperatively work out suitable behavior goals for the child and techniques to help him or her improve. We will also implement a timetable to evaluate progress. Parents will take a child home in case of repeated hurting of other children or staff.

## RELIGION

We do not disseminate any religious teachings in the classroom unless in the context of cultural diversity or respect of world views. Like most secular schools, we employ philosophies from many cultures and beliefs. A statement such as "some people believe" would accompany any remarks concerning religious beliefs. We do encourage parents and staff to share their celebration of a meaningful religious or cultural holiday with us in an age-appropriate manner. An open sharing of such customs and beliefs expands the children's understanding of the world. It is also a way to learn acceptance and appreciation for other people's beliefs and differences.

Nothing that we would do at the school is meant to supersede or interfere with your own personal teachings. The foundation laid in your home is by far the strongest basis for your child's religious growth. If you feel your child is confused by a school discussion, we encourage you to reinforce our statement of "some people believe [...]".

An honest open conversation together with your teacher or administrator is always appreciated.

# CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT

We are obligated by law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Our full staff is a mandated reporter. DCFS will be contacted.

## ABSENSES

Please call the school to let us know if your child will be absent. It is helpful for us to know if your child will not be coming to school. This is especially true on days when field trips have been planned.

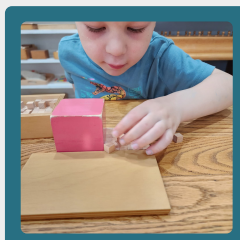
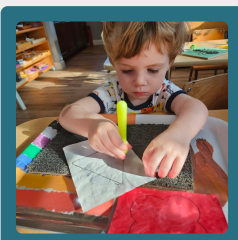
### Illness:

Children who are not physically well won't fare well in a learning environment. They also may be contagious and pass their illness on to other children and teachers. Because of this, we are unable to accept children into our care if they are experiencing:

- Vomiting.
- Body rash, lice, or nits.
- Diarrhea; 3 or more watery stools in 24 hours.
- Thick mucus or puss draining from the eye(s).
- Swollen glands.
- Unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused, or cranky.
- Communicable diseases (meaning contagious sicknesses). Some examples of common communicable diseases include flu, whooping cough, strep throat, hand-foot-and-mouth disease, etc.
- A fever of 100° F.
- A fever of 100° F or more AND sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, or just not feeling well.
- Please look at the Covid guidelines for re-entering in case of quarantining.

We appreciate a quick phone call from you if your child has fallen ill so we can take measures to protect other children and staff.

If a child becomes ill while at school, the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child immediately. A parent or other designated backup person must be available to pick up the child within 45 minutes. A child sent home for the above reasons must be kept home for 24 hours *after* symptoms subside.



# COVID GUIDELINES

## OUTBREAK INFORMATION

### WE WILL BE HONEST AND ACCURATE

All Decisions are based on CDC and State Health Guidelines.

- We will correct misinformation. Children often imagine situations worse than reality; therefore, offering developmentally appropriate facts can reduce fears.
- We will explain simple safety steps. We will discuss with your child that diseases spread between people who are in close contact with one another. When an infected person coughs or sneezes or when one touches infected objects or surfaces.
- To Stay up to date on the facts. Go to [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov) for additional information.

We Will inform parents if there are any children sick with a contagious disease or virus.

## ARRIVAL

Our Arrival will provide precautions and personal attention to the children. Adults will maintain social distance, and sign in their child. Parents will not be allowed in the school, especially during the high season of contagion.

- Children are greeted with a smile and warm greetings.
- Parents need to sign in their children upon arrival.
- Children will be visibly screened for symptoms (cough, extreme lethargy, fever).
- We will be performing a temperature check daily and as we see may be needed.
- We will use hand sanitizer on the hands of children when entering the school.
- An arrival time from 7:45 -8:10 am allows children to arrive at staggered times.
- Persons who have a fever of 100.40 (38.00C) or above or other signs of illness will not be admitted to our school as per CDC guidelines. We encourage parents to be on alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.
- If a child develops some type of illness while at school, we will immediately contact the parents.

## DEPARTURE

Dismissal for the academic day goes from 3:15 to 3:30 pm. Extended Day dismissal is at 5:30pm

We will start departure from either the outside gate or the front door depending on the weather. We will bring your child up to the gate. Parents are not to come into the school area to avoid confusion. A teacher will always dismiss your child and provide the sign-out book at dismissal. Please be prompt about pick-up time.

Ideally, parents or a designated person should drop off and pick up the child every day. If possible, older people such as grandparents or those with serious underlying medical conditions should not pick up children, because they are more at risk for severe illness from COVID-19, when there is an outbreak. During departure, we will touch base with you about your child and give you work or a report of the day. Teachers may not be able to engage in a long conversation but will always make sure that you are informed about the day.

Please be sure to sign out your child every day.

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## HAND WASHING

**We will be implementing these preventative steps required by the state and encourage staff to take everyday preventive actions to prevent the spread of respiratory illness.**

- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 80% alcohol.
- Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Remember to supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Cover cough and sneezes.
- All children will cover their mouths and nose with a disposable mask while in school indoors. Masks are not required for outside play.

## SICK DURING COVID OUTBREAKS

- Children will not be allowed to come to school if they have even mild cold-like symptoms including cough, fever, runny nose, drowsiness, diarrhea, sore throat, or chills. If a child becomes sick at school, we will immediately isolate them in our facility. We will immediately clean and disinfect surfaces in our isolation room or area after the sick child has gone home.
- Children will only be allowed to return if they have been symptom-free for 24 hours for normal colds, and 5 days fever free for COVID Strands, without the help of fever-reducing medications.
- The reasoning behind this is to not only protect that child and the other children's immune systems but also the teachers at school. Teachers may not come to school with any of the above symptoms and this may imperil our daily functioning.
- Children with sick immediate family members with Covid-like symptoms may be asked to stay home for a period of time. Please be conscientious of self-quarantining during this time. This is not a requirement but a request.
- If we find out that there has been contamination in the school, we will notify you immediately, assess contamination, and close our facility if necessary. We will follow the following required guidelines if the vaccine for 2.5-5-year-old has not been released:

**If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member:**

- **Close off areas used by the person who is sick.**
  - **Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.**
  - **Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.**
  - **If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection are not necessary.**
  - **Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.**
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## RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER COVID

Although there are no clear school closure guidelines when there is a high incidence of COVID within our community, a five-day quarantine for the school may need to be implemented to keep the remainder of the community as safe as possible. I want all of you to know that we do not take an event like this lightly and I am certain that the inconvenience this causes many of you is burdensome and complex. For this reason, I would like you all to know that it was with an absolutely heavy heart that we close.

Schools are an important part of the infrastructure of communities, families, and our community. We are a yearlong school and we will do everything possible to stay open. We try to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all our students. This criterion is at the forefront of our mind, and continuity in our school and staying open is our goal. But when many children are impacted, quarantine, after this many cases reported, may have to be an option.

After looking at all the data with medical professional input, this is what the CDC and pediatricians advise:

PCR tests for return to school after an outbreak. Antigen Tests or fast tests are usually reliable but can fail. PCR tests remain the gold standard for detecting an active COVID-19 infection. The tests have accurately detected COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began. Highly trained clinical professionals are skilled at correctly interpreting PCR test results. Rapid antigen tests, like PCR tests, aren't perfect. If you get a negative result, that doesn't mean you are free of COVID-19. It might mean you tested too early or too late. All professionals concur that if your test is positive after 5 days of quarantine, with no fever and no sign of the disease, you are out of the contagion.

If you get a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 (coronavirus), you need to self-isolate (stay in your room) for 5 days. There is a high risk you could spread the virus to other people. Do this even if you completed your first round of COVID-19 vaccination, had a booster, or had a positive PCR test in the past.

Antibody tests should not be used to make decisions about safe entering or returning to group settings like schools, child care, or dorms according to the CDC.

If you have a positive PCR test, had COVID, but now have no symptoms, or have been symptom-free for 5 days, please consult your physician to find out if it is safe to return and send us a note.

Thank you ever so much everyone for your understanding and support in keeping the kids safe.

## OUTDOOR TIME

During outbreaks, we do not use outdoor masks but do have lots of ventilation.

We have an extended outdoor workspace for art and certain outdoor activities through the morning or for "outdoor practical life" when the weather is permitting, for children to work in our back garden.

The outdoor stations are classroom work that a child can do outdoors such as gardening or art. During the summer we add more "outdoor practical life" so more children can be outdoors at once. For the time being, children during the summer can choose to work outdoors and do art activities supervised by a teacher during the work period to extend our outdoor time.

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# MEDICATIONS

We understand that children will occasionally need to take medicine (such as antibiotics) at school. Any medications given to the child will be at the discretion of the preschool administrator and must be in the original (prescription) container, with the physician's instructions on it and a copy of the prescription. A parent's signature is required to authorize us to administer prescription medication.

Please ask

the preschool administrator to show you the medication forms and inform your lead teacher of any medications.

A physician's signature is not required for these non-prescription medicines: antihistamines, cough medicine, decongestants, anti-itching cream, diaper ointments, powders, and sunscreens. However, parents must fill out the authorization form, and non-prescription medicine must also be in its original container. A written physician's permission is required for other non-prescription medicines, not on the authorized list.

**We are not authorized to administer herbs or vitamins without a prescription.**

All children must have a signed emergency form, immunization form (or exemption form), and health history form on file by their first day of attendance.

# MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Our procedure for life threatening emergencies is as follows:

- **Call 911 immediately**
- **Administer first aid and/or CPR as appropriate**
- **Notify parents or guardians**
- **Transport child to the hospital as appropriate (or designated hospital)**
- **Document emergency and file in child's file.**

In case of illness or accident it is necessary for us to know where you may be reached at all times. Please always keep a current list of emergency contact information on record with us.

# PARENT EMERGENCY CONTACT SHEET

Please make sure that you fill in a Parent Emergency Contact sheet. This helps us ensure we have the most effective way to contact you in case of any emergency at School or while on a field trip.

Thank you!





# SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR SCHOOL

## CLOTHES

Please take a few minutes to mark your child's clothing and belongings with their name. This will aid your teachers in daily operations as well as ensure your belongings get home with your child.

**In the classrooms, we ask for 2 changes of clothing in case of accidents or illness.**

In toddler classrooms, we prefer 3 changes on hand during potty training. We require indoor shoes while inside, please provide a pair of inside shoes for your child to change into and out of, which will be kept at the school. We suggest slip ons with no buckles on the sides for ease of use and safety.

## INDOOR / OUTDOOR SHOES

Children will switch into indoor shoes before coming into the classroom. Shoes will remain outdoors or on the shoe racks depending on the weather. Each class will have a shoe rack for outdoor shoes. During High viral seasons shoe changing and hand washing promotes a healthy classroom environment.

### Why Classroom Shoes?:

**Cleanliness:** Designating different shoes for indoor and outdoor learning promotes cleanliness inside the classroom.

**Transition:** Switching shoes when moving between indoor and outdoor educational spaces signals students to switch gears in rhythm and place as well. Classroom shoes are easy to put on and remove, allowing children to practice independence and to mindfully participate in this transition between spaces.

**Proprioception, Movement, and Comfort:** Secure, non-constricting classroom shoes promote the balance and proprioception necessary for dance, active games, eurhythmy, and other kinesthetic learning. Additionally, soft-soled footwear makes it comfortable for students to sit cross-legged on the floor during lessons; this relaxed seated posture frees children to pay attention to teachers and fellow classmates.

**Whole-Body Health:** Footwear with soft, flexible soles supports the development of strong, healthy feet. Wearing traditional (stiff) shoes for long periods during childhood can actually mold the bones to the shape of the shoe and force toes to squeeze together, potentially resulting in painful foot health problems as adults. Over time, any postural foot abnormality can also have an effect further up the body, permanently altering posture and walking style.

**Safety:** A classroom should be a safe space where children can freely question, explore and discover. While children's feet should be activated and engaged, it is also practical to provide a certain level of protection against cold floors, hot water, and sharp objects that stray from their designated areas. Classroom shoes keep children safe without slowing them down.



## WATER BOTTLES / STATION

Children will have to have their own water bottle that goes home each day to be washed. Water bottles will be placed at a water station for whenever a child needs a drink of water and brought to the table for snack time and lunch time.

Water bottles need to go home and be run through the dishwasher at the end of the day at home. children will refill the water bottle as needed during the day from the water filter placed in each classroom for the children. We will have reusable cups available for emergencies.

## SNACK

Snacks will be open daily throughout the work period, after afternoon lessons, and as needed by the children. A full tummy helps kids concentrate.

Snacks are being provided by families and the school. Currently we have a calendar on [www.bimontlab.com](http://www.bimontlab.com) with each families snack week. There is a snack list provided on the website to assist with choices to bring. Family contributions help us provide a wide variety of foods and snacks for the children. We as for the moment that all snacks brought to school are in individualized packings to prevent any contamination of snacks. Even though we are conscious of the waste this causes, we are still being health conscious.

The children will use their own water bottles at the snack table. thank you all for your support!

. Children will wash their hands before snack and clean their table after snack. We ask that we stick to having healthy snacks as much as possible.



## PARENTS AND VISITORS

Parents and other adults will not be allowed into the building for now, to minimize the amount of people coming into the school. We are still minimizing contact time.

Visitors and prospective parents can visit after school hours only for the time being. We hope to open our doors in the near future.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT



Parent involvement is highly encouraged. We plan parent nights as well as family activities throughout the year. We also encourage parents to join us on field trips and to come to school to demonstrate any interesting hobby or talent to the children. We encourage parents to visit all areas of the school any time unless we have an outbreak, please give us notice. Siblings are also encouraged to visit the classroom and participate in family events, just a little limited due to covid at the moment.

## CONFERENCES

Parent conferences are offered three times a year in the Fall, Winter, and end of Spring. Although they may be scheduled at any time if a parent has a concern.

A home visit conference is offered in the Fall for toddlers, and is optional but encouraged.

Parents are strongly encouraged to attend these conferences to gain a better understanding of their child's progress. Teachers will observe and record information on children's development. We will share the information with you, learn from your knowledge of your child, and together plan for more opportunities to grow.

We will keep your child's information confidential by only sharing information with staff for educational purposes and with government regulatory agencies.

This information is only used to help your child and help us plan better for all children; they are not shared or sold to outsiders.

BMLA has developed comprehensive conference reports that give a whole child perspective to your child's progress. We look at the emotional, physical and academic progress your child has made, but we do not give grades as is true to the Montessori philosophy. Our parent teacher conferences are usually a half hour long and they give a

Your teachers will keep you up to date on news or events with our newsletter and messages through Seesaw our communication App.



## TOYS

We try to have children only bring items from home for Show & Tell which is every Friday. They can help young ones with a nap if they have an attachment, but we prefer no loveys for nap times. We have found that in certain instances, the use of personal items has helped with transitioning, arrivals, etc. Based on this, we are open to discussion if bringing an item is appropriate for your child.

We prefer all toys stay home because accidents do happen and we know how difficult it can be to lose a loved belonging or have it ruined by accident.

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# POTTY TRAINING

## MONTESSORI PARENTS

Instead of “potty training,” or “toilet training” the Montessori method refers to the process as “toilet learning.” That’s because a child learns how to use a toilet through a process natural acquisition like walking or crawling, which don’t require training.

Toddlers crave independence (or haven’t you noticed 😊) and having to lie down while someone else changes their diaper will begin to bother them as they prefer to be on their feet and in charge of their own activities. Keeping this in mind can help motivate parents to approach toilet learning as a journey to independence.

Although many parents don’t think about toilet learning until the toddler years, you can actually begin to prepare a child for success in this area beginning at birth.

Here are some easy steps to take in the months before officially kicking off the potty training process:

- During diaper changes, discuss what your child is feeling in the moment, using phrases like, “You’re wet,” or “Your diaper is full.” Exposing a child to this language will give them the tools to communicate their bodily functions when the time comes.
- As they begin to walk, you can make putting on pants a collaborative process, so that they are on their way to being able to pull down their pants by themselves.
- When you notice your little one can coordinate both hands together to do a task, you can give them self-care jobs like rubbing their hands together with soap under running water.

And that’s the whole job! We are simply teaching our children about the words, feelings, and tools that will allow them to use the potty successfully.

## PREPARING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR TOILET LEARNING

You’ll want to create a prepared, child-sized toileting environment before your child is ready to start learning to use the “potty” or toilet, maybe around 13-15 months. The magic of the prepared environment lies in the fact that you’ll be ready to respond to your child’s needs.

Once you have a prepared environment, you can start doing “stand-up” changes in your child’s toileting area. Stand-up changes allow for more independence of a child as the child is able to collaborate more on the process, like pulling down their pants. In our program we will be implementing the Montessori stand up changing. Our partnership is key to potty learning success.

You can set up an area in the bathroom with supplies for easy access as we do in the classroom. An easy way to help them is to have something to use as a support when they are changing themselves, for example your child can hold onto the tub as you change them. After every diaper change, invite your child to sit on the toilet, so they get used to that routine, just as we will do in the classroom.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR CHILD IS READY?

There is no magic age for toilet learning as every child is different. But, there are both physical and psychological signs of readiness to watch for.

Psychological Signs of Toilet Learning Readiness:

A child will learn the diaper is a foreign object and begin to try to rip it off. You may notice your child hiding behind a door or under a table during a bowel movement as they seek privacy. A child may show interest in what other family members are doing in the bathroom. A child may tell you they had a bowel movement or urinated. These are signs we look for as we help to transition into toilet learning.

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## CLOTHES FOR TOILET LEARNING

Clothing for Toileting Independence is a key component to child success.

It's important to set your child up for success when they have an urge to go to the bathroom, and that can even come down to the type of clothes they're wearing. Overalls, big dresses and tights can get in the way. Elastic pants are great for toilet learning as your child can learn how to pull them up and down easily. Your child will first learn how to pull up and down their pants through collaborating with you, and their teacher and the assistants, before eventually learning how to do it independently.

## COMMITTING TO TOILET LEARNING

When your child is showing the signs of toilet learning readiness, it's time to fully commit and make the switch from diapers, to thick, cotton underwear. We would like them to come to school in the cotton underwear.

The training underwear, also called training pants, will be absorbent so your child won't have urine running down their leg if they wet themselves, but they will still learn what it's like to feel wet. We recommend sizing up, so your child can pull on and off their underwear independently.

During this time of toilet learning, you'll want to invite your child to sit on the "potty" or toilet about every 30 to 40 minutes, beginning when they wake up in the morning. If your child is in a group care setting, you'll want to make sure we both follow your routine as closely as possible.

Some families choose to let their child still wear a diaper overnight in the early toilet learning stages. Whichever route you choose, it's important to stay consistent, as it can be a confusing time for a child. If you decide to continue with a diaper overnight, watch for a streak of three to five mornings when your child wakes up with a dry diaper. That's an opportunity to switch your child to training underwear overnight.

### Plan Ahead

You can prepare for middle of the night bed-wetting incidents by layering a child's sheets. Just put a second mattress pad and fitted sheet over the first set. That way, you'll only need to remove the top layer in the middle of the night. You can also lay out a dry change of pajamas. This will lead to better nights for the entire family.

You'll also want to be ready if your child has to go – while on the go!

Some tips include lining your car seat with puppy pads to make cleanup easier. You can also keep a travel potty in the back of your car. If your child has the urge, you can simply find a spot to pull over and line the potty with a diaper, which will make cleanup much easier.

## NAPS

We believe in the importance of naps for a child's well-being on these busy days at school. Children under four years old are expected to nap; children over four are expected to rest if they need it. We provide cots for the children to sleep on. Please provide a crib sheet, a blanket, and a small pillow Toys or Lovey (if needed) again, not of our preference.

Nap Sacks are easy and great to set up with blanket and pillow all together. You may consider a nap sleeping sack. All nap supplies will be sent home at the end of the week.



## DONT' GIVE UP

Some days it may feel like toilet learning is not clicking, while other days are successful. This is completely normal! With other adults, we might say that our little ones are going through a regression, which may be the case, but in true Montessori style, avoid telling your child this or at the moment that they had an accident. We will continue to focus on the experience of being wet and dry. Remember, they are sensorial learners.

Say "Let's change those wet underwear," instead of "Uh-oh, you've had an accident." This way, we place emphasis on the sensation they are experiencing rather than something they did, which can result in shame. We don't want a child to feel bad about themselves or the process, but rather build their confidence as they continue to learn.

You can also expect regressions which may occur during big life changes like the arrival of a second child or moving homes. Even simple changes in health or routine like a cold or a dropped nap can produce regressions.

Be patient and try to focus on the successes

## POTTY LEARNING REWARDS

In the Montessori approach to toilet learning, we avoid rewarding a child with prizes for using the toilet. Otherwise, your little one will start to expect a reward each time they have a success. The reward will lie in their pride as they grow in their independence.

In class we will celebrate with a smile and celebrate their independence.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy uses a three step method (soap and water, water, then sanitizer) to clean and sanitize the children's hands.

Sanitizing happens before each meal and snack and also when we are doing food prep in the classroom.

The classroom works and surfaces are sanitized with 80% alcohol to maintain the work disinfected. We sanitize during outbreaks with more frequency. Hand washing is mandatory when entering the classroom in the morning, coming in from outside, before meals, and after restroom trips. Please keep your child home if you feel he may have a communicable illness.

At the end of the day, staff will sanitize the classroom thoroughly with a disinfectant. We sanitize all high-touch surfaces, materials used by the children, tables, chairs, and materials used by staff communally. Floors are mopped daily.

Staff must wash hands upon entering the school, after physically touching any child, before and after meals, and after handling any equipment children have used.

Masks and gloves will be worn when helping children in the bathroom, in very close quarters, or when handling any children's bodily fluids.



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# LUNCH

At BMLA we bring our own lunch. Children will set their lunch on a plate and have utensils as needed, but we ask that you provide all supplies needed for lunch. Due to contact and safety protocols, at this time it also means that we will not heat lunches during this time. Please practice eating lunch at home where children serve themselves from the thermoses or containers that you provide them so that they feel at ease when having lunch at school. For children used to a hot lunch, please use thermoses for warm meals.

**We are not a peanut-free school, we are sensitive to children's allergies and provide options for them or arrange options for parents.**

We ask parents to provide snacks a couple times a year and it will be on the calendar on the website. But children bring their own lunch each day for the school day.

Good nutrition is an important element in our overall program. Please pack adequate amounts of protein, which plays an important role in your child's growth and stamina throughout the day, and keep sugary items to a minimum. We do not allow candy, soda, or gum at our school, and recommend that bread or crackers be made from whole grain flour or Gluten free. Your child's meals must be labeled clearly as a snack or meals. Each snack or meal must include a liquid to drink. The drink could be water or one of the required components such as milk, fruit or vegetable juice.

## **Need ideas about what to bring?**

### **Here are some suggestions:**

- Fresh or dried fruits (Apples, Bananas, Grapes, Kiwi, Oranges, Plums, Berries)
- Fresh vegetables (Carrots, Celery, Cucumber, Broccoli, Green Beans, Tomatoes,
- Sandwiches (turkey, ham, salami, roast beef, tuna, egg salad, etc.)
- Cheese (string, cubes, slices, cottage, cream)
- Beans and rice
- Mixed nuts
- Chicken lettuce wrap
- Yogurt
- Crackers with dip (peanut butter, hummus, etc.)
- Green salad
- Soup, mac and cheese, or pasta leftovers
- The Department of Early Learning specifies the following guidelines for meals: Snacks must contain at least 2 out of the following:
  - A milk product (such as milk, cottage cheese, yogurt, cheese)
  - A meat or meat alternative (such as meat, legumes, beans, egg)
  - A grain product (such as cereal, bagel, rice cake or bread)
  - Fruit or vegetable

### **Lunch should be balanced and contain some of each of the following:**

- A dairy product (such as milk, cottage cheese, yogurt, cheese)
  - Meat or meat alternative (such as beef, fish, poultry, legumes, tofu, or beans)
  - A grain product (such as bread, cereal, bagel, or rice cake)
  - Fruits or vegetables (two fruits or two vegetables OR one fruit and one vegetable to equal the total portion size required). When juice is served in place of a fruit or vegetable it must be one hundred percent fruit or vegetable juice.
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## WHO TO TALK TO

If you have questions or concerns about your child in the classroom, please talk with your child's lead teacher. The Head of School, Ms. Claudia, will be happy to assist as well.

## LICENSING AND DIVERSITY

Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy is a Flex member of AMS (American Montessori Society), and working toward accreditation. BMLA is licensed by the State of Illinois and meets all health and safety standards as required by the State of Illinois. There are regular health and fire inspections, and our license is renewed as required. We are current members of AMS and working toward accreditation.

We recognize the value of and promote diversity. We actively teach global citizenship. The policy at Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy is that no person shall be subjected to discrimination because of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, marital status, disabled or Vietnam Era Veteran status, or presence of any physical, mental, or sensory handicap. Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy acknowledges and protects the rights of children, families, and staff to their own culture and to the customs, beliefs, and practices that comprise that culture.

## SNOW POLICY

We will make every attempt to stay open and service you. However, in the case of snow please check your email often. This is the primary way we will notify you of school closures, late starts, etc. Note that:

- If a snowstorm hits mid-day, parents are asked to make every attempt to pick up their child early.
- If a storm hits mid-day, and Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy must close, parents will pick up their children as soon as possible.
- On a snow day, even if open, we may not be able to be at full capacity because of licensing ratios and possibly limited staff. Expect communication from the preschool administrator in this case. Snow days should be considered limited care only. We follow the local school closings for snow days.

Snow days are not made up at a later date. Refunds are not available for snow days.

## FIRE DRILL PROCEDURES

We practice fire drills quarterly and disaster drills. Our focus is on Fire and lockdown procedures. Staff are trained on an ongoing basis. A disaster plan is available at the sign-in area. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom.

Preparedness: The school maintains, water, food and first aid equipment in the classroom. While we supply the necessary items. Our building is regularly examined for safety, and any areas found wanting are addressed.

## REPORTS TO PARENTS

If a child becomes injured or hurts another child (even just a little) while at school, we write a quick report or note to the parent summarizing what occurred. This will be sent home at the end of the day. In the event of a serious incident, you will be notified immediately. Some Discipline issues may warrant an immediate call, and we reserve the right to do so while the incident is fresh for our student.

Toddlers and nappers get daily reports.

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## FIELD TRIPS

Upon admission, parents sign a waiver for walking field trips within the neighborhood in their contract. For any other field trips, we will have an additional waiver signed. Those children who do not have signed permission will stay on school property. We organize field trips with an ample amount of parent volunteers, and children will be assigned to parent volunteers for the field trip and transportation to and from our location.

## PET POLICY

Animals at or visiting our School are carefully chosen regarding care, temperament, health risks, and appropriateness for young children. We do not have reptiles, which typically carry salmonella, a bacterium that can cause serious diarrhea disease in humans, with more severe illness and complications in children. We will occasionally hatch chickens but donate them back to a farm.

Parents are notified in writing when animals will be on the premises. Children with an allergic response to animals are accommodated.

Animals, their cages, and any other animal equipment are never allowed in the kitchen. Children and adults wash their hands after feeding or handling animals or animal equipment.

## BIRTHDAYS

The Montessori birthday celebration is a special occasion that children excitedly await. Your child is welcome to bring a special snack or Cupcakes, please no party favors!!

Parents come to our celebration, usually celebrated before Lunch so that all the children are awake and able to participate. Parents come with a picture for each year of life.

During the birthday celebration students rely on physical props of sun, the months of the year, a special birthday mat that depicts the seasons to represent their journey and growth throughout the year

It's a great way for a child to feel special and connect with their place in this world and the Universe. It is the family journey around the sun each year. A birthday walk around the sun, helps children understand the concept of time and the basics of astronomy.

With the Pictures, we build a Timeline of life for each child on that special day. The timeline is posted in the classroom to show the growth our student has had from birth to the present time. We also have the parents tell a story for each year of the child's life. These stories are precious to the children and they glow with joy as each story is told. Then they travel around the sun with their parents. In the end, the child shares their accomplishments for the year and what they look forward to for the following year. They blow out the candle and share a treat with all the friends in the class.

Please count on setting up your celebration as your child's birthday gets closer!



## TECH SUPPORT

We are very lucky to have Mr. Juan Herrera support us with all the technology. If you have any technical issues please email him at:

Juan@bimontlab.com

He helps with See Saw, Calendar, and all issues with our web site!

Thank you Juan!

## SCHOOL CONTACTS

Ms. Claudia Medina

claudia@bimontlab.com

Ms. Roxana Vera

roxana@bimontlab.com

Ms. Rocio Almanza

rocio@bimontlab.com

Ms. Maribel Caldera Forte  
information

maribel@bimontlab.com  
info@bimontlab.com

## SUPPLIES NEEDED RECAP

- 2 changes of clothes
- Bring own lunch daily
- water bottle daily
- Inside shoes
- clothes labeled
- sign up for See Saw community messages go out through SeeSaw
- Sign up on the Web site

Nappers

- 2 changes of clothes,
- sleeping sack
- Reusable Bag for accidents.

Thank you for choosing the  
Bilingual Montessori Lab Academy for your children.

“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner  
everywhere.”

-Chinese Proverb

Welcome to our  
community of learners.  
Claudia Medina