

MLC



Montessori Learning Center of Asheville

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Parent Handbook

*We accept children and employ staff regardless of color, creed,
country of origin, or orientation.*



Supporting school readiness programs for young children and their families.
www.smartstart-buncombe.org

Revised 2013

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**This may seem like a lot of information but please bear with us.
Most of the questions you might have can be answered in this handbook.**

Mission Statement

We encourage the acceptance of all creeds, religions, countries of origin, abilities and disabilities, ages and beliefs.

MLC aims to provide safe, positive and developmentally appropriate educational experiences that reinforce a child's natural curiosity, determination, enthusiasm and sense of self in our society and world.

The Montessori method helps the child to help her or himself, to interact with a structured learning environment, which is self-correcting, and takes advantage of a child's natural sensitive periods.

We strive to help children become flexible and open to the new experiences ahead of them that we, as adults, have no knowledge of, nor place in... the future. Our philosophy embraces a respect and love of nature and the world around us, as well as a respect of self and others.

Montessori's philosophy also respects and understands a child's need for spirituality.

History

- 1982:** Gunam Nathan founded Montessori Learning Center at All Soul's Parish in Biltmore, Asheville.
- 1986:** Victoria Robertson became head of the school in January. Enrollment was 24 students, ages 2 1/2 to 5 years old. There were three employees.
Over the next four years, enrollment increased to 40. A Toddler Program was introduced. There were five teachers. Special needs children were admitted to the school with the help of the Mainstreaming of Area Preschoolers Program (MAPS) and the Foster Grandparents Program.
- 1991:** MLC moved from All Soul's Parish (which became Cathedral of All Souls), and was fortunate to land at St. George's Episcopal in West Asheville, the school's present location. St. George's helped substantially to finance the improvements necessary for licensing, with Father Clem Gunn as minister. The Toddler Program was first housed in the upstairs Parish Hall, and the children played in the Memorial Garden courtyard, and a small playground (1/3 the size of the current one).
- 1998:** In May, the Parish was renovated and the entire MLC program moved downstairs, to share one level, in its present area. The Kindergarten class moved into the old kitchen. Toddlers moved into the old dining hall. Three-year-olds moved to the old Kindergarten room.
- 1998:** In July, the school received a grant for a new playground, designed by parent Mary Weber along with staff, parents and children of MLC. This grant of \$29,000 plus \$1000 from alumni parents paid for a new play space three times as big as the previous one, with a sand box, raised garden beds, butterfly garden, swings and play structure. Three shade trees, in addition to an existing Bradford Pear and Dogwood were planted, and an 80% shade cloth was suspended over the sandbox.
- 2012:** Our playground received a considerable overhaul. New mulch, sand, raised garden beds and woodworking shed was added to our playground thanks to the CMR Memorial fund and parent fundraising. We were able to get a composter thanks to the fundraising of 2011-2012 students. We also received \$500 from POEMS (*Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale*.) With this we build a raised platform and tree bench. Also a wood coin succulent garden and bamboo sun barrier was added to the sandbox. In August and September, the hallway and Toddler room floors were renovated. St. George's roofing and guttering was replaced and new ground drains were installed to improve water drainage around the building.
- 2013:** We continued work on our playground with new benches, roll-up sandbox cover and shape platforms. Thanks to the hard work by staff, the Wayman family and other generous volunteers we now have an outdoor garden classroom, which is a beautiful work in progress.

Current Teachers 2013

Together, our teachers' have over 92 years of experience teaching children, 72 credit hours of early child care education and 4 degrees!

Ms. Victoria-(4-K) celebrates 27 yrs

Ms. Tonya- (4-5) celebrates 19 yrs

Ms. Susan- (Floater & Early Care) celebrates 9 yrs

Ms. Nikki- (age 3) celebrates 7 yrs

Ms. Donna- (age 3) celebrates 6 yrs

Ms. Caitlin- (office, Stay Late & substitute) celebrates 4 yrs

Ms. Mindy- (Toddlers) celebrates 3 yrs

Ms. Sarah- (Toddlers & Stay Late) celebrates 2 yrs

Program Description

We aim to create a program inclusive of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, religions, and ethnic origins, and with inclusion of special needs whenever possible.

- MLC serves children 18 months to Kindergarten.
- The Toddler Program has 10 children with at least two teachers each day.
- The 3-6 program has a max. of 30 children each day with at least four teachers in four rooms.
- We also have at least one school-wide floater every day.

*Visitation of our program is welcomed and encouraged. School tours are given by appointment only. Please call or email to schedule a tour, which we prefer to arrange for Friday mornings before 11am.

Beginning of New School Year

Fall semester begins around the third Monday of August. The Thursday prior to the first day is our Open House from 10-12 with a Toddler parent meeting at 9:40am (teachers available for child supervision).

Extracurricular Options

We have various optional extras available to your child(ren). These have monthly/weekly fees independent from tuition. Details can be found at open house, website or on the billboard in the school hallway. We also have various seasonal and cultural field trips, visitors and special events, which are announced as made available.

Weekly Fun at MLC:

Monday: Every other Mon. is a special circle time reading Ms. Kim from Buncombe County Library. Also, once a month is Music with Ms. Sandy who spends 30 minutes with each class.
(Included in tuition)

Tuesday: YWCA swim lessons are available. A YWCA mini bus provides transportation and 1-2 teachers accompany the children there and back. *A minimum of 10 children is needed.*

Wednesday: Lango Asheville comes at 10:45am

and teaches the children Spanish through active musical play.

Computer Pals comes every other Wednesday and helps young children become more accustomed to working with computers.

Thursday: At 10am, the Center Stage Dance Studio offers Tumble Bugs and Pre Ballet.

Friday: Soccer Shots arrives at 1:30 and teaches children the basics of the game of soccer. Children are able to learn how to work as a team and get exercise at the same time.

Extra Help

Buncombe County and Asheville City Schools offer speech, physical and occupational therapists, who can screen children age three and up as well as deliver services on site as needed. Please let your child's teacher know if you are interested in any of these services.

Outdoor Play

MLC considers our outdoor play area to be an outdoor classroom; activities often include painting, water play, hammering and gardening. Climbing equipment, swings, sand box, butterfly and vegetable gardens are all areas of changing surfaces in both sun and shade, which inspires the children's fine and gross motor skill development as well as imagination.

Continued on next page.

U.S. Health and Human Resources suggest children to go outside daily for at least an hour of vigorous play. We adhere to this rule year round unless weather conditions will not allow it. (*i.e. thunderstorms or temperatures below 40 degrees*)

Thus, be sure your child has seasonally appropriate, labeled extra clothes at all times in his or her cubby.

Summer Program

In the months of June and July we offer summer ‘camp’. Each month has four, weeklong sessions, each having a special theme that changes each year. (Ex. little chefs week and green thumbs week)

Tuition rates are the same, however, pro-rated amounts are available for single weeks. Note this pro-rated amount is only available if we are informed of your plans at the beginning of the summer.

*We offer drop-in days if our max capacity is not met. Call the school the morning of for rates and availabilities.

Preschool Program Options

The center is open mid-August - May

We offer part time and full time options

5 half days/week, 8:00 – 12:00

5 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30

4 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30

3 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30

2 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30

Monday-Friday 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM
The school day is from 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM
If needed, extended care is offered for an extra fee discussed on page 6.

Early Care is from 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

Stay Late is from 2:30 PM – 5:30 PM

We also have a summer program which runs 8 weeks in June and July. Summer hours are 7:30-2:30 with NO AFTER CARE

We close for the following holidays/events:

Labor Day

Fall Parent/Teacher Conference Day

Thanksgiving Break (3 days)

Winter Break (approx. 2 weeks)

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Spring Break (1 week)

Spring Parent/Teacher Conference Day

Memorial Day

Independence Day

1-3 week(s) off before or after the summer program

2-3 Teacher Workdays

Daily Schedule

7:30 AM	MLC opens- at least three teachers are available for all early arrivals, one in both the Toddler room (18 mons-2.5yrs) and Ms. Tonya’s room. (3-6 yrs)		washing and lunch preparation. 3-6 children rotate outside.
8:00 AM	Three more teachers have arrived	11:30 AM	3-6 Children return inside for hand washing and school-wide lunch.
8:30 AM	All teachers have arrived and are in classrooms beginning the day	12:00 PM	Dismissal for ½ students and Toddlers begin naptime and 3-6 begin rest time
8:30-11 AM	Children are with their primary teacher(s). Each classroom has an individual program: e.g. Circle Time followed by children pursuing individual works and teacher-directed lessons. When a teacher feels a child has completed all activities in ‘homeroom’, the child can ask to visit/trade with a child in another classroom	1:00 PM	3-6 resters begin to wake and go outside
10:30 AM	Toddlers go outside	1:30 PM	All 3-6 children return to the playground
11:00 AM	Toddlers return indoors for hand	2:00 PM	Story time for the Stay Late children and Toddlers wake and go outdoors
		2:30 PM	Second dismissal Toddler and 3-6
		2:30-5:15 PM	Stay Late activities: art, gardening, puppets, plays, stories, music, dress-up, etc.
		5:30 PM	MLC closes

Fees & Payment Policy

The Montessori Learning Center is a non-profit organization, therefore we have no other source of funding other than tuition and fundraising. We also have great teachers and love to keep them. We support teacher training, continuing education and maintain good materials for our children to work and play with, while paying all the bills of an ongoing business. Thus, we need a commitment from our parents to be responsible and timely with tuition payments.

The following are part of that commitment:

Annual registration fee is \$30.

Annual materials fee equivalent to one month's tuition is due the summer before attending.

A discount of \$50 is awarded when yearly tuition is paid in full at the beginning of school.

Tuition is due by the TENTH of each month. August tuition is due the first day of school.

Returned check fee is \$20.

A late fee of \$20 will be charged on tuition and/or EC/SL fees that is not paid by the 10th of the month. Outstanding amounts are subject to a monthly late fee and the student will not be permitted to attend until balance is paid in full.

Two months written notice is required for a child leaving mid year, or tuition for the two months must be paid.

We do not discount tuitions for when children are absent due to illness or vacation as we have a tight budget and wish to flourish for years to come. You are not paying for the number of days physically attended but to secure your child's position at MLC. We have a long waiting list of families who wish to attend so commitment is necessary.

Invoices are sent out via email on the first of the month. Make sure we have your primary email address on file. A reminder/late notice will be sent out on the 10th of the month.

We DO except cash, check or money order. We DO NOT except credit or debit cards.

Any account questions can be emailed to accounts@mlcasheville.org.

Early Care and Stay Late Policy

Early Care and Stay Late is \$6 per hour with a ceiling of \$250. *If tuition is overdue, this service may not be used. Extended care fees are calculated at the end of each month and are included on following month's regular tuition bill. (ex. Feb. invoice will have Feb. tuition + Jan. EC/SL fees)

- If you use the Stay Late care, please make sure you arrive to pick up your child before your designated time. It is upsetting and disrespectful to your child and the teacher to be kept waiting. Please call in case of an unexpected emergency. Once all children have been picked up the teacher must still go about closing the school by 5:30. A late fee will be charged payable to the teacher waiting with your child.
- Late fee scale is \$1 per min past 5:30 **or** designated time (ex. 5:32= \$2, 5:47= \$17)
 - We have a 3 Strike policy on late pick-ups: after the third we ask that you not leave your child past 4:30pm.

Please choose one of the two After Care options: please inform us of your choice.

- a. **Staying After:** includes 2:30pm-4pm, still at \$6 per hour
 - i. Children in the Staying After program must be picked up before 4pm.
 - ii. There are approximately 20 positions for Staying After available.
 - iii. If children in this program are not picked up by 4pm the late fee scale will be in effect.
- b. **Staying Late:** includes 2:30pm-5:30pm, still at \$6 per hour, with a slight price break after 4:30.
 - i. Children in the Staying Late program must be picked up before 5:30pm.
 - ii. There are 7 positions (with 1 teacher) and 12 positions (with two teachers) for the Staying Late program available.
 - iii. These positions are on a first come first serve basis.
 - iv. The school closes at 5:30pm sharp. Please be respectful to your child and the teachers by arriving before closing time.

We understand that life and schedules are ever-changing, therefore, **numbers allowing**, we will open up the after care programs three different times throughout the school year for those with new after care needs. *Cont.*
 -First, in mid-October, second, at the beginning of the New Year, and third, in mid-March.
 -Otherwise, any last minute after care needs will have to be cleared by the after care staff for that day.

Note about after school pick ups: When you arrive to pick up please collect your child(ren) from the playground promptly. Teachers begin to leave at 2:00 and we must keep our ratios up with NC Child Care regulations.

Furthermore, we are still legally responsible for your child(ren) as long as they are in our playground/property (even if you are present!), therefore Stay Late fee is in effect until you and your child(ren) leave the playground or Stay Late classroom

Current Tuition Fees

(Subject to annual change)

Toddler Program:

5 half days/week, 8:00 – 12:00.....	\$432
5 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$537
4 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$487
3 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$430
2 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$348

3-6 Program:

5 half days/week, 8:00 – 12:00.....	\$422
5 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$525
4 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$475
3 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$420
2 full days/week, 8:30 – 2:30.....	\$340

Enrollment Procedures

For admission:

- We ask that you and your child(ren) first schedule a visit to our program.
- An Application, Emergency Contact form and Taking Care of Business/Travel/Discipline form must be completed and on file before child's first day.
- You have 30 days following enrollment to submit Medical Report forms including current shot records and/or exemption.
- \$30 Registration *Fee (must accompany initial reg. form)* + non-refundable Materials Fee

Parent Communication and Participation

Every two months a newsletter is sent out via email with a couple hard copies posted in the school. Parents are encouraged to submit upcoming special events, photos or announcement to be added to the newsletters. We also try to have at least two parent workdays (Saturdays) each school year to help maintain and stay involved with our outdoor learning environment's development.

MLC has two scheduled Parent Conference days per school year, in the fall and spring. We also have two school picnics in the early Fall and at the end of the school year. The final picnic includes performances by the children and Graduation ceremony.

If parents need information, have suggestions or concerns please write a note, send an email (via website) make a phone call or ask for an appointment with appropriate person (teacher or director).

Parents are also encouraged to volunteer at MLC.

Make sure to sign in and out of our guest book if you plan to stay.

Volunteering opportunities may include but are not restricted to:

- Reading to the children or have them read to you.
- Sharing fun and interesting projects within areas of special interest and expertise.
- Assisting with preparation of materials for use in classrooms. We often need materials that are inexpensive but difficult to collect (fabric and paper scraps, buttons, yarn and old magazines)
- Helping with transportation to field trips is essential and a great opportunity to share in your child's day.
- Sharing a special cultural or religious background. We wish to expose children to a variety of cultures and events in order to encourage open mindedness and tolerance for others in the world.

- Also if you are a whiz at making play dough, have a green thumb, play a musical instrument, grant writing experience or whatever- please share!

Everyday Celebrations

- Birthdays are a rite of passage. We celebrate with photos of the child from birth on, a special song and circling of a candle that represents the sun and passage of the years.
- Losing teeth is also celebrated, as well as the arrival of sibling and other family events.
- We welcome educational items for Show & Tell on designated days, but discourage toys from home unless needed for security or naptime.

Safe Arrival & Departure Policy

For your child's safety, please deliver him or her to their teacher or appropriate Early Care room. Children must not walk into the school alone and siblings must NOT be left in the car unattended.

Please remember:

- Child Care regulation states children's hands must be washed before entering the classroom.
- If you arrive before 8:25 am please deliver children in the preschool program to Ms. Tonya's room and toddlers to their room.
- Our school day begins at 8:30 AM, most classes have their circle time before 9:00 AM therefore if children do not arrive on time they are missing an important and valuable part of their day.
- If you must be late, then a phone call to keep us informed is appreciated and when you arrive please respect the other students already at work by quickly and quietly dropping off.
- We also have the red line policy, which is at the base of the classroom doors. This is where you drop your child off and say goodbyes.
 - Parents are asked not enter the classroom once the school day has begun so not to confuse or upset the classroom's activities.
- If you will need assistance in separating, please arrive earlier so a teacher can assist you.
- Note about independence: it is among our primary goals to promote as much independence as possible. Please allow your child to put their things away, wash their hands and enter their classroom unaided.

Saying "Good Bye"- New children can be reluctant at first, so please be cheerful, firm and positive when saying your "good byes". Usually the longer a parent hesitates and lingers, the more unsure a child becomes. Tears usually go away quickly. Rest assured if a child is upset for longer we will call. Please make sure all phone numbers are correct and on file.

"Work"- will be placed in your child's cubby to be collected at the end of each day. Please take time to go through it with your child, however primitive it may be. Also remember the *process* is more important at this age than the *product*. Many parents keep work throughout the year to measure progress. The classrooms have many interesting objects. If any should find their way home, please send them back.

Cubbies- Please check your child's cubby daily! Your child's LABELED belongings can be stored in their cubbies. Please send a nap bag with fitted crib sheet and blanket (or a sleeping bag) which needs to go home weekly for washing. Also, a bag with "extra clothes" and a pair of slippers for children to wear inside (this is optional). Again, please label all removable clothing, bags, lunchboxes, water bottles, etc.. Keeping up with 40 sets of everything each day is a challenge!

Reminders for Toddler Parents- Please remember that you will be responsible to keep ample diapers and wipes for your child at school. We encourage potty training as soon as a child seems ready by group trips to the bathroom, see Toddler Handbook for further details. A general goal is that children moving up out of the Toddler room should be well on their way if not fully potty trained before entering the three year old classrooms.

Illness & Care

Our primary concern is the health and safety of your children. Please make sure your children do not bring to school anything that would endanger the safety of self or others.

Medication

Any medications must be given directly to the teacher in the original container, so the teacher may lock it in our medicine box.

- Parents must also fill out a form that will be signed by the administering teacher.
- This policy applies to herbal remedies, prescription medications and over the counter medicine, including sunscreen and diaper cream.
- Please DO NOT add medication to your child's drink, as another child may mistakenly consume it.

For the health of others, sick children need to be at home: A healthy child is one who is fever, vomit, and/or diarrhea free for 24 hours WITHOUT the aid of medications.

(ex. If Sally is sent home with a fever at noon on Monday and takes medication so the fever breaks at 11 PM she may not return to school safely and fever-free until Wednesday.)

- After an incident of communicable disease or any highly contagious or infectious condition such as pink eye, a pediatrician's permission is required before returning to school.
- We understand that colds and allergies happen. However, if a child is obviously unable to participate fully and happily in school activities, the best place for her or him is at home with a loving parent and TLC.
- We attempt to minimize the incidence of ill health and contagion by making every effort to frequently sanitize and wash hands and materials.
- Children who have never been exposed to other children (and germs) other than those in the family home will get sick! Immunity must be developed and these are the years to develop it.
- We understand how difficult it can be for a family when children are sick, but we must act for the good of the school community and will call you to pick up your child if he or she is ill.
- We will isolate the child and keep him or her as comfortable as possible until your arrival.
- Please make sure your current contact information and emergency numbers are up-to-date.

Feeding & Mealtime

Due to NC regulations, MLC cannot provide meals for children, as we do not have a restaurant grade kitchen. Parents must provide lunch, snacks and drinks for their child(ren) daily. The advantages of this are parents can send foods their children enjoy and provide for the eating philosophy of their family (Kosher, vegetarian, vegan, macro-biotic, etc.)

Please send a nutritious meal including a protein, fruit, vegetable, grains and dairy (or dairy substitute). It is NC law that milk be sent daily unless the child is allergic.

- **Please make sure we are aware of any allergies your child might have so we can post this for teachers and parents who may bring in snacks to share.**

The following should be brought to school daily:

1. Labeled (name & date) Water bottle for water use only...please no juice or sugary beverages
2. Labeled (name & date) Lunchbox and subsequent containers
3. Labeled (name & date) Healthy snacks (AM and PM if needed for Stay Late)
4. Labeled (name & date) Milk or milk substitute

Labeling is important. Children with allergies can mistakenly consume others food if not properly labeled. Please save sweets, soda and heavy in sugar desserts for special treats at home. Teachers will remove and send home any sweet items.

Over the years, we notice that the children with nutritious lunches and snacks do, indeed, experience less illness. Please use containers that are easily cleanable, non-breakable and your child is capable of using with minimal assistance. Once again independence is key.

- ✓ Place lunchboxes and milk in the refrigerator and snack in teacher's designated snack bin.
 - To be as eco-friendly as possible, please send reusable containers (no plastic baggies please)
- ✓ If something requires heating, please have your previously prepared food in a microwave-friendly labeled container and place in one of the "heat up" bins.
- ✓ Note: any extra preparation needs to happen at home, containers should be ready to heat and serve directly (i.e. no easy mac packages etc.) We only have a short window for heating.

The following is the suggested servings for a well-rounded (state approved) meal:

Meal	Milk/substitute	Bread/alternative	Fruit & Vegetables	Meat/alternative
Breakfast	1/2 cup toddler 3/4 cup 3-6 yrs	1/2 slice	1/2 cup toddler 1 cup 3-6 yrs	
AM Snack	1/2 cup	1/2 slice	1/2 cup	1/2 oz.
Lunch	1/2 cup	1/2 slice	1/4 cup	1-2 oz. or Fish or cheese 1 oz. Cooked dry beans 1/4 cup 1 egg Yogurt 1/2 cup
PM Snack	1/2 cup	1/2 slice	1/2 cup	1/2 oz.

Please be sure your child's meals are well balanced. If we were inspected and a meal is incomplete the school is required to provide the missing elements... this is not something we can budget for.

Clothing

- Children should wear comfortable clothing in which they can work and play.
- Clothing should also be easy for the child to remove and put on independently.
- Although we wear smocks for messy activities, accidents do happen so please make sure a change of clothes (including seasonal wear, socks and undies) is in your child's cubby.
 - Any soiled clothes will be sent home and a new set of extra clothes will be needed.
- Children should be properly prepared for outdoor activity.
- Flip-flops and cowboy boots are cute but not the best for our daily vigorous activity outside.
- MLC has donated clothing for use if none is available in their cubby, however if you have any borrowed clothing we do ask that you wash and return it promptly.

Transportation

MLC is unable to provide transportation at this time.

- St. George's is on the public transportation bus route.
- Teacher cannot transport children to or from school, but we are glad to help facilitate carpooling with other families.
- MLC occasionally has educational field trips. In most cases we need help with transportation.
 - Prior to a trip, a permission and informational form will go out to parents and if needed will request that parents volunteer to help with transportation if possible.

Weather Policy

In the event so snowy and/or icy weather that makes roads impassible or dangerous to use, we use the **Asheville City Schools' decision** as our guide and close on their schedule. Furthermore, a message on our school answering machine will also inform parents of our decision. We only consider 'make-up' days in years of excessive closures.

Child Abuse & Neglect Obligations

It is our legal obligation to report to Social Services any evidence of abuse or neglect we observe. We will be prosecuted if we do not. Please tell us if your child has had an accident involving cuts, bruises, etc. We can also help obtain professional help for families in need.

-----**Cut or tear here**-----

Please read the handbook thoroughly, sign below and return to MLC.

Signatures ensure that you have read, understand, and will comply with the workings and policies of the Montessori Learning Center of Asheville.

Thank you, MLC

Signature _____ **Date** _____