

Welcome to Laren Montessori School

On behalf of the staff of Laren Montessori School of South Holland it is our pleasure to welcome your family into our Laren family. We at Laren Montessori School are proud to be a child centered school where the family and school personnel work together to ensure a positive, successful experience for all children. We are so pleased to have your child in our program and look forward to working with and getting to know your family and watching your child grow and blossom in all ways – academically, socially, emotionally, physically. This will be an exciting experience for all of us. If your heart is in the right place, your hands can work miracles.

Please let us know if there is any way we can help or be of service to you.
We are here for all Laren families!

Ms. Mulyani
&
Laren Montessori Staff Members

In Praise of Children

Children are as varied as the flowers in a garden.

Each fragile, growing child is unique and precious.

You are trusting us to nurture them and
are blessing us with the joy of seeing them
bloom and grow.

Thank you for your trust and support!
We truly appreciate it!

Laren Montessori School Staff

Montessori Philosophy

Maria Montessori was born in Ancona, Italy in 1870 and was the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School. She developed the Montessori Method of educating young children through intense observation, with a sensitive eye, of the interests and needs of the child.

The Montessori approach rests upon these points:

- * Very young children experience sensitive periods during which they learn and absorb more easily than at earlier or later times in their lives.
- * Children should be introduced to the world of learning through a prepared environment, in which specially designed apparatus and techniques are used to engage the child's mind at a given level of readiness in mastering a variety of tasks.
- * Discipline is a point of arrival, not of departure. Inner discipline cannot be achieved effectively except in an atmosphere of freedom and choice.
- * The children learn to work by themselves in a prepared environment while enjoying the presence of other children. Their learning tasks center around the use of many materials, which are so designed to test the child's understanding and correct their errors at every step in the learning process. The directress (teacher) prepares the environment, directs the activity, functions as an authority, and offers the children stimulation, but it is the children who learn through the motivation they find in the work itself.

Montessori Reading

In order to understand, implement, and follow through with the Montessori philosophy at school and at home, we **strongly encourage** our parents to read about Maria Montessori and her philosophy and details of the Montessori philosophy and method. You can find information online by searching our school's and other Montessori websites. In addition, the following titles are available at your local library or bookstore and we also have a copy of them in our school office, which you may borrow:

- Secrets of Childhood by Maria Montessori
- The Child in the Family by Maria Montessori
- Montessori: A Modern Approach by Paula Polk Lillard
- Look at the Child by Aline D. Wolf
- Children the Challenge by Rudolph Diekurs

History of Laren Montessori School

Mary Catherine Prendergast established Laren Montessori School in 1965. The school occupied different sites in Harvey churches before moving to our present location in 1974. We accept all children ages 3, 4, and 5 regardless of sex, race, color, creed, and national and ethnic origin. We offer a 3 and 5 day, half and full day preschool program, a 5 day full day kindergarten program. We offer before and after school care and the opportunity for participation in extracurricular activities.

School Objective and Goals

The objective of Laren Montessori School is to provide an early education program in which the foundations for a lifetime of creative learning are developed effectively and efficiently within each child. Specifically it develops a learning environment that surrounds children with maximum motivation and opportunity to learn and achieve in directions consistent with their individual level of maturation. Our goals for our students are to develop:

- 1) a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- 2) an abiding curiosity.
- 3) habits of initiative and persistence.
- 4) sensory-motor skills in order to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge.
- 5) inner discipline and a sense of order.
- 6) a sense of clear concepts.
- 7) concentration for lifelong study skills.
- 8) socially acceptable behavior.
- 9) each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations.

The above objective and goals will be achieved only with Laren staff and parents working together. Parents are the primary educators of their children. Laren Staff are here to assist parents, not to replace them. Laren Staff and parents are partners working together with good communication and mutual support. Laren Staff will work with you as a team based on mutual respect to help students with academic excellence and strong character development.

School Accreditations, Affiliations, and Memberships

American Montessori Society

Illinois Montessori Society

Illinois Non-Public Schools Association

South Holland Business Association

School Administration

Laren Montessori School is organized as a not-for-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors. This School Board is made up of the school administrator and parents of currently and formerly enrolled students with accounts in good standing. School Board members come from a variety of backgrounds with varying areas of expertise and education. These Laren moms and dads have joined the School Board as a result of their strong interest to help maintain Laren's long history of providing children with the best all around education. The Board members work together at a minimum of 6 yearly evening meetings to make decisions on Laren Montessori's policies and procedures. Any Laren parent may run for a position on the Laren Montessori School Board. New members are elected or appointed for a position at the board meeting at the next school year's School Board. The daily operations of the school are conducted by the school administrator and staff.

Admissions Policies

1. A **\$125.00 non-refundable fee is required with the initial enrollment application.**
2. A **\$50.00 non-refundable fee is required for all readmission applications** for additional school years.
3. A **fundraiser/committee deposit of \$250.00** is required from each family to secure the child's enrollment for the upcoming school year. This deposit is due in July on a designated date each year (or before the child begins attending school if the child is enrolled after the regular July deposit due date). This deposit is our school's assurance that all families will actively participate in our school's program. ***The Laren Staff cannot do everything alone and we want and need you to help and be involved in your child's school.*** This deposit is refunded back to the family at the end of the school year ***if the following items are met:***
 - a. Parents must fulfill a **parent committee obligation**. There are several committee options to choose from. Parents are more than welcome to participate on more committees as they see fit. Serving as a School Board member fulfills this parent committee obligation. \$60.00 of the deposit is refunded for parent committee participation.
 - b. Parents must participate in fundraisers. Our school operates only with tuition and fundraisers, receiving no state or local subsidy, so we need your help:
 - i. If your child is enrolled in our program as of September, you must participate in our **mandatory Taffy Apple fundraiser** held in September and October. This is our biggest fundraiser of the year. Each family must sell 10 cases of taffy apples (each case holds 12 three packs of taffy apples) during the month long sale. \$140.00 of the deposit is refunded for sale of the required 10 cases. If less than 10 cases is sold, then the family receives a pro-rated portion of the \$140.00. Selling more than 10 cases is of course acceptable and can be done.

- ii. If your child is enrolled after our Taffy Apple Sale has ended we cannot prorate the deposit. You must participate in whatever fundraiser is left before the school year ends, such as:
 - Winter Concert, Spring Show/Cultural Event, in which you must sell a minimum of \$100.00 in program book ads, admission tickets, raffle tickets, and \$50.00 in food contributions.
4. Each family must sell 4 boxes of World's Finest Chocolate (each box holds 60 variety packs). We chose **WORLD'S FINEST CHOCOLATE** because of the tremendous appeal of the chocolate and its easy selling devices. If you chose not to sell candy, you will pay the \$120 buyout fee instead.
5. Laren Montessori School is based on annual tuition. The first tuition payment installment for the school year is due in mid July on a designated date each year. Tuition can be paid monthly (in 10 or 9 payments), on a trimester basis (in August, November, and February), or in full by September 1st in which case you will be given a 5% discount. (If your child is enrolled after the first August tuition payment is due, your tuition payments will be due from August through April). The final tuition payment must be paid in April. Late payment fees after the due date is \$10.00, after 5 days-\$20.00, after 10 days-\$30.00. After 15 days, a student's enrollment is in jeopardy. There is a sibling discount of \$300.00 for full day and \$150.00 for half day program will be deducted from the last tuition payment.
6. A copy of every child's **ORIGINAL** birth certificate must be on file in the school office in order for him/her to attend school. Parents must bring in the original birth certificate. Laren Montessori administrative staff will make a copy of that original and return it to you immediately. Our school follows the Illinois state requirements for age. A child must be 5 years old by September 1st to enroll in our kindergarten program.
7. A current physical form with up to date immunization records signed by the child's doctor is an Illinois state requirement for children attending school. It must be on file in our school office before your child can attend school. The school is subject to closure unless we have these forms for every student. Every new, third year, kindergarten student must have a new physical before school begins.
8. During the 2 days prior to the first day of school, new students and their parent(s) are each scheduled a 20 minute time period to visit their classroom and meet their teachers. This will assist with the new student's adjustment to all of these new aspects in his/her life.
9. Laren Montessori School retains the right to dismiss any new student within an 8 week period from his/her first day of school whose progress or conduct is deemed unsatisfactory and or whose influence does not serve the best interest of the students and school. A student can also be dismissed/removed from the program at anytime during the school year. This policy is further clarified in the "Discipline" section of this handbook.

If a student is dismissed from the program, all registration fees are nonrefundable as well as the required deposit on file. It is mandatory for parents or guardians to pay off the annual tuition as well.

10. A parent has the right to withdraw a student from the program at any time during the school year. ***A written notice from the parent/guardian is required to withdraw a student.*** Upon receipt of the written withdrawal request in the school office, parents shall understand that children are admitted for the full academic year and that agreement to pay for the school year is not subject to adjustments for illness or absence. **There will be a penalty for breaking the contract. If the contract is broken in the middle of the school year,** the required deposits on file are nonrefundable due to the parent's choice to withdraw. **In order to close the account, the parents/guardian needs to pay off the entire annual tuition, as well as any extended care fees. The account balance must be zero.** If a refund is owed to the parent/guardian, it will be issued via a school check through the mail within 7 days of receipt of the written withdrawal notice.

Confidentiality

Within Laren Montessori School, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of Laren Montessori School on a need-to-know basis in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Confidential and sensitive information about faculty, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as Laren Montessori School strives to protect everyone's right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and HIV/AIDS status or other health related information of anyone associated with Laren Montessori School.

Outside of Laren Montessori School, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law. Parents will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of Laren Montessori School, persons whom the information will be shared, and the reason(s) for sharing the information.

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Laren Montessori School are considered mandated reporters under this law. The employees of Laren Montessori School are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Laren Montessori School take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of Laren Montessori School cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- 1) unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- 2) severe verbal reprimands
- 3) improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- 4) transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (i.e. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- 5) dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- 6) not providing appropriate meals for your child
- 7) leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- 8) sending a sick child to school over medicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside
- 9) children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

Parents Right to Immediate Access to Their Child

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at Laren Montessori School, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (i.e. Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Laren Montessori School must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with Laren Montessori School, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Laren Montessori School cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Laren Montessori School suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. Laren Montessori School will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

Visitors are allowed in Laren Montessori School at the discretion of the School Administrator. An employee of Laren Montessori School will accompany visitors at all times throughout the school.

School Hours and Daily Schedule

Program length: Classes begin the end of August and end during the final week of May or first week of June each school year. A summer program is offered to all students and lasts 8 to 10 weeks.

Office Hours: 8:00a.m.-4:00p.m.

Programs offered:

- 1) 5 day ½ day preschool: 8:45-11:30a.m. or 12:45-3:30p.m.
- 2) 5 day all day preschool or kindergarten: 8:45a.m.-3:30p.m.
- 3) Before school care: 7:00-8:45a.m.
- 4) After school care: 3:30-6:00p.m.

- 5) After school extracurricular, scheduled one day per week: Music class (ages 3-6); Indonesian dance (ages 4-6); Book Club with Art (ages 3-6).

Class Schedules:

* Montessori Early Childhood classes:

- 1) 15 minutes – student arrival
- 2) 1 ¾ hours – individual work time in the classroom – children choose work/snack – a 20 minute group time occurs at some point during this work time for group presentation
- 3) 30 minutes – Line Time (group time): controlled and purposeful movement on the line – gross motor skills (walking, marching, hopping, galloping, skipping, jumping, dancing), individual movement skill, songs and poems, calendar work, story time
- 4) dismissal

* Traditional Pre-K and Kindergarten class: for full day kindergarten students this is the 1st half of their day

- 1) 15 minutes – attendance – calendar work – daily weather - daily story problem
- 2) 15-20 minutes – story time (reading and discussion) – daily lesson
- 3) reading and writing of the day's sentence on the chalkboard
- 4) individual seatwork
- 5) center time
- 6) dismissal

Naptime: All full day students who are 3 years of age will have a rest period every afternoon. Nap time begins at 1:00p.m. and ends at 3:00p.m. Each napping child will have a rest cot, sheet, blanket, and pillow to use at naptime everyday, which is supplied by our school. The child's cot is marked with their first and last name and the child's pillow, sheet, and blanket are kept attached to the child's cot so only he/she will use them. If a napping child has an accident and urinates on their cot apparel, the soiled bedding will be sent home with the child that day at pickup time and must be returned the next day after it has been laundered properly (washed, dried, and folded).

Emergency Closing and Inclement Weather Information

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing by a written notice sent home with their child if the closing is determined prior to the day of closing. Otherwise, parents will be notified via email.

Should the school need to close in the middle of the day, the school staff will attempt to reach the child's parents first to arrange for pick up. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the persons listed on the emergency contact card will be called to pick up the child.

Arrival and Dismissal

Transportation:

The responsibility of transporting the children to and from school rests entirely with the child's parents. Parents may arrange for family members, friends, or other caregivers to assist with transportation. Names and vehicles (make, model, and color) of all authorized drivers must be given to the child's teachers to ensure that children are released only to authorized adults.

Authorized Persons for Drop Off and Pick Up of Students:

Children will be released to authorized persons **ONLY!** If someone arrives to pick up your child from school and school personnel have not been given prior authorization in the form of a verbal or written notice from the child's parents to pick up that child, we will not release the child to that person until we contact the child's parent. Even if the person is someone the child knows we will need to contact the parent if school personnel were not notified. Your child's safety is **VERY** important to us!

Arrival and Dismissal Times:

It is imperative that arrival and dismissal times be adhered to. Children need to arrive at and be picked up from school at the designated times for the following reasons:

- 1) Arriving late upsets the tardy child. He/she feels awkward entering his/her classroom after class has started.
- 2) Children picked up late from school get very nervous and uncomfortable. We do our best to reassure the child, but it bothers him/her when he/she knows that mom or dad should have been there to pick them up by that point.
- 3) Promptness in a child's life is very important. Children need consistency and a set routine. At this age they need and want order.
- 4) You are showing your child that being on time is important. You are helping your child to be a responsible person who meets commitments and obligations.

Arrival times:

Early Childhood a.m. ½ day and full day classes: 8:45a.m. at the child's classroom door
p.m. ½ day class: 12:45p.m. at the child's classroom door

Dismissal times:

a.m. ½ day class: 11:20a.m. at the child's classroom door
p.m. ½ day and full day classes: 3:15p.m. at the child's classroom door

Tardy Policy: It is important our children develop the responsibility of being on time for commitments, such as arriving on time for school. Late arrivals disrupt classes in session and students' development of responsibility. To ensure students arrive on time for school, the Laren Montessori School Board enacted a Tardy Policy effective January 2009:

A.M. Class drop off is 8:45-9:00a.m. Students arriving after 9:00a.m. are considered late (tardy). P.M. Class drop off is 12:45-1:00p.m. Students arriving after 1:00p.m. are considered late (tardy). You are allowed 2 tardies per month. On the day of the 2nd tardy you will receive a courtesy reminder that you have 2 tardies for the month. If your child is tardy a 3rd

day in that month, the day of the 3rd tardy you will receive a notice informing you of the 3rd tardy and you will owe a \$25.00 Tardy Fee. This fee has to be paid within 7 days or your child will have to miss a day of school. If your child is tardy a 4th day in that month, the day of the 4th tardy you will receive a notice informing you of the 4th tardy and you will have to pay a \$50.00 Tardy Fee and your child will not be able to attend school the day after the 4th tardy.

Arrival Policy (an extension of the Tardy Policy):

It is important our children develop the responsibility of being on time for commitments, such as arriving at school on time. Late student arrivals disrupt classes in session, students learning, and students' development of responsibility. The tardy policy has helped to improve arrival and will continue to remain in effect. However, some families who arrive tardy are coming excessively late (i.e. 9:45am, 10:00am). Late arrivals take away from your child's learning, hinder the consistency of your child's routine, and disrupt classes in session. Hence, we are instituting the following policy to rectify the problem.

Effective November 5, 2012:

A.M.class drop off for the early childhood classes is 8:45a.m. with lessons beginning at 9:00am.

P.M. class drop off is 12:45p.m. with lessons beginning at 1:00pm. Unless an excused absence or late start has been prearranged (i.e. due to a scheduled doctor's appointment or unforeseen emergency), all students must arrive at school within 15 minutes of their class lesson start time:

Early childhood students must arrive by 9:15am for morning classes the latest 1:15pm for afternoon the latest classes.

If a child arrives after those times, the child will not be permitted to attend their morning session that day. If the child is a full day student, he/she can return for the start of their afternoon class at 12:55pm.

Do we want your child to miss a day of school? Absolutely not. The goal of this policy is to ensure that all children are at school in their classrooms learning and getting a top notch education, the reason you chose to become part of our school.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures:

For the safety of all children we have strict driving, drop off, and pick up procedures that everyone MUST follow. All drivers must adhere to the following rules:

- 1) As you are pulling into our parking lot for drop off or pick up at the regular class times you will be in a drop off/pick up line. You MUST stay in the line and wait patiently for your turn. DO NOT pull around other cars and get out of line. YOU MUST STAY IN LINE!
- 2) For drop off, as you pull up to your child's classroom door you will stop your car, look and make sure your child's teacher is at the door, let your child get out of the car on the school side as quickly as possible, and your child will then walk up to his/her classroom door by him/herself where the teacher is waiting. For pick up, you will also pull up to your child's classroom door, stop your car, the teacher will send the child out the door to you, and the

child will get into the car. If you need to help your child with their car seat or seat belt you need to pull through the pick up line and take care of that task in the parking lot. **You do not get out of your car.** If your child needs assistance a Laren staff member or volunteer Laren parent will be there to assist your child.

You will then drive through the remainder of the line toward the parking lot exit.

- 4) If you need to speak to your child's teacher at drop off or pick up time you still need to follow the above 3 steps. After you drop off/pick up your child and are driving through the remainder of the line you may pull into our parking lot and park your car, get out of the car, and walk over to the classroom door to speak to the teacher. Speaking to the teacher at this time is not encouraged, however, as the teachers are focusing on children's arrival and the start of class time. Send a note with the desired message or for the teacher to call you.
- 5) If you are using before or after school care you will follow a different procedure which is described below in the next section.

As stated previously, for the safety of everyone, all drivers **MUST** follow these procedures. Parents, it is your responsibility to relay these rules to other drivers who will be assisting you with drop off/pick up of your child. It will help if you arrange to bring other drivers with you at least once to show them how our system works.

Extended Care Hours and Procedures:

If your child will be staying in our before or after school program you will use the following procedures:

- 1) Drive into the school area and park in the parking lot.
- 2) Come to the office door and ring the school door bell. Before or after school care staff or office personnel will open the door to greet you.
- 3) Come into the office and use the office time clock to check your child in or out. This ensures accuracy when calculating before and after school hours used. Extended care hours are billed at \$4.50 per hour for time used in increments of 15 minutes.

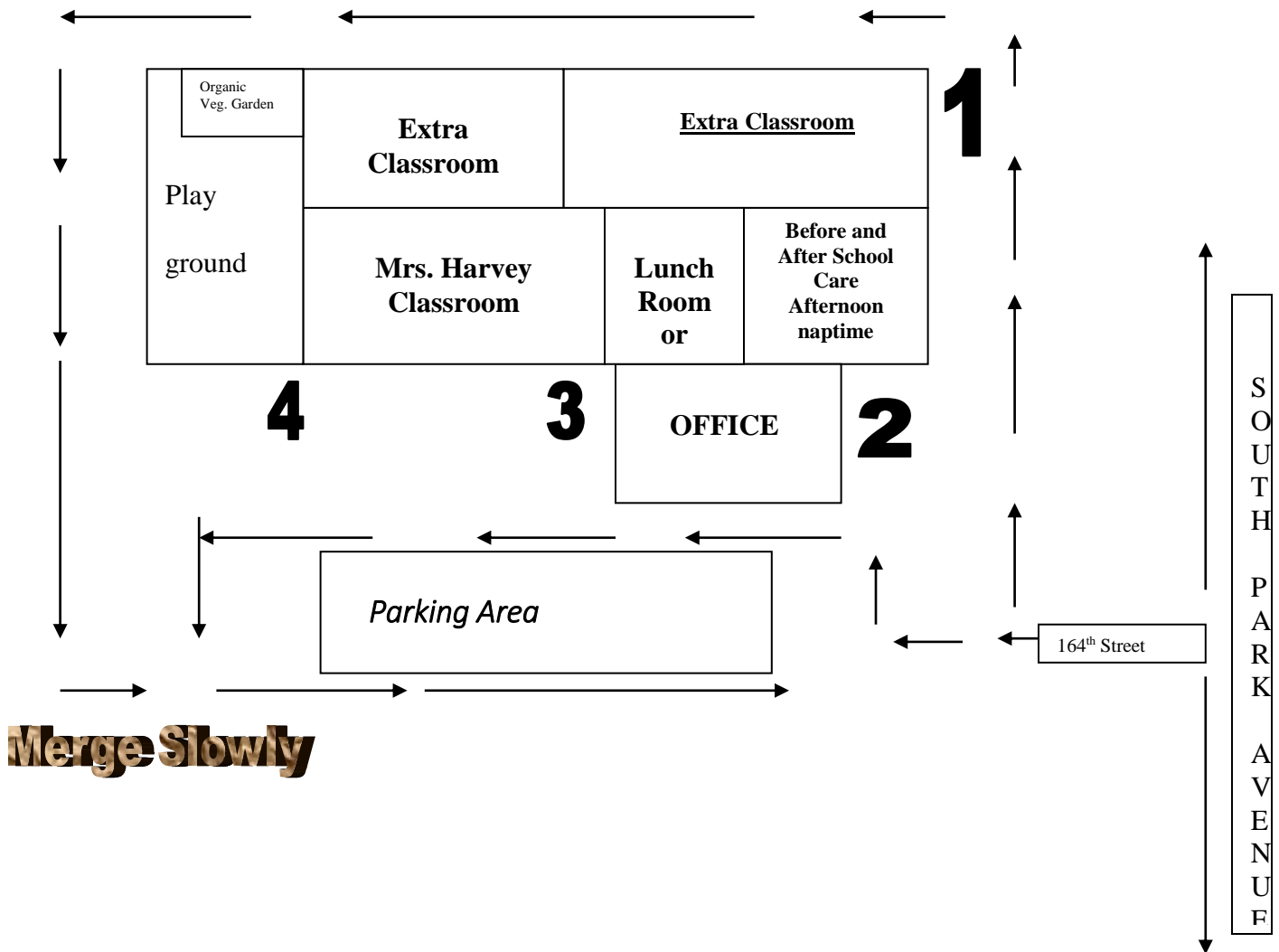
Before School Care Drop off:

For early childhood students: 7:00-8:40a.m. drop off at the school office door

After School Care Pick Up:

At 3:30-6:00p.m. pick up at the school office door

The next page in this handbook is a driving pattern that visually and verbally reiterates the procedures and drop off/pick up locations.



Student drop off and pick up times and procedures - Please drive slowly in all areas.

Area 2 – Drop off for before school care between 7:30 and 8:30am.

Pick up from after school care between 3:30 and 5:00pm

Please park in the parking lot and walk to the office door.

Area 3 – Drop off A.M. for Montessori Mrs. Harvey’s class between 8:45 and 9:00am.

Early pick up half day between 11:15am and 11:30am, afternoon class pick up between 3:15 and 3:30pm. Please stay in the car pick up line and pull forward to the fence as the cars move forward.

Discipline

Maria Montessori believed that motivation and discipline come from within the child. The essence of the Montessori philosophy and method is self-motivation and self-discipline. Inevitable thoughtlessness and shortcomings in behavior will arise and teachers will deal with these situations accordingly. The child should be guided in choosing one form of behavior over another and in accepting the consequences of their behavior. Laren Staff will help students learn which behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable. As conflicts arise in the classroom the teachers will observe the children involved and their interactions. At the appropriate time the teacher will involve her/himself and engage in a discussion of the situation with the children involved – the problem at hand, feelings of both children, appropriate and acceptable language to use, and solutions to the problem. Our goal is for the children to learn to handle conflict situations themselves, as they will have to do for the remainder of life.

Behavior policies are established to help provide and maintain an attitude that encourages mutual respect among the students and toward all adults who are present in the building. It is very important for young children to learn and develop respect for others and their environment. To ensure the safety and respect of all students Laren Montessori School sets the following rules:

- 1) Keep your hands to yourself.
- 2) Walk through the classroom.
- 3) Speak with an inside voice using appropriate and respectful language.

Teachers will make parents aware of discipline issues regarding their child. If a child becomes uncontrollable and is felt to be a danger to him/herself, classmates, or teachers, the child will be removed from the classroom and taken to the office at which time the parents will be called to pick up the child immediately.

When a student's behavior is out of line or misguided, we expect parents to support us in our attempt at correcting the behavior as the student progresses toward good character development. We expect the Laren Montessori School parents/guardians to have an attitude of responsibility.

Certain behaviors are of a more serious nature and for these, the student may be suspended or in extreme cases, where all other available means of help and correction have been exhausted, the student may be dismissed/removed from the program. Among these are:

- c. Fighting or physically harming another student
- 2) Disrespect or disobedience toward Laren Staff members
- 3) Stealing, lying
- 4) Use of profane language, bullying
- 5) Damage to school property
- 6) Possession of dangerous weapons, drugs or alcohol or use of such on school property

Each case will be handled individually according to the nature and seriousness of the violation. The School Administrator will determine the seriousness of the situation and if a suspension or removal from the program is appropriate. The Administrator will consult with the School Board as needed.

Playground/Recess Behavior: Full day students have a 30-40 minute recess period everyday before or after eating lunch. Students in the after school program will have a 45-60 minute outdoor play period each day also. Children go outside for recess everyday provided it is not raining and the temperature is above 20 degrees during the winter months and heat is not extreme during the autumn/spring/summer months. During recess the students may play at both our school's playground and the South Holland park, which is the playground located just east of our school grounds. They will also play in the open grassy fields just east of our school grounds.

Outdoor recess is a time for students to play in the fresh air. They need time each day outside to move and play. Students still need to maintain self-control and school rules are enforced during recess time. Children need to think of others as they play and move, making sure they keep their hands to themselves and show consideration and respect to other students and the Laren staff. Running outside on the playground and in the field is allowed as long as a child does not come in contact with other children.

Adult Code of Conduct

All adults are expected to treat each other with respect, civility, politeness, and good manners. We need to be mindful of this in all our communication and relationships with Laren staff, parents, and children. Hurtful behaviors such as name calling, ridicule, bullying, or being mean spirited have no part in our Laren family and are not acceptable.

Parents, guardians, or other care-givers should recognize Laren Staff as professionals and treat them with respect. School personnel also pledge to treat parents and visitors respectfully.

Communication, honesty, fairness, and integrity are necessary to resolve conflicts in a just and peaceful manner.

We stress that parents are the primary educators of their children. As a school staff, we pledge to work as a team with parents. This partnership, based on mutual trust and respect, will encourage academic excellence and character development.

Personal Items From Home

Students are **not permitted** to bring personal items from home to school (i.e. toys, jewelry, money, videos, etc). These items are not needed during the school day and can very easily distract a child from classroom tasks and materials. Other students can also get distracted by the unnecessary items. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. Check your child's jacket and pants' pockets to ensure they are not bringing anything to school.

If a teacher wants students to bring specific items to class as part of a theme or lesson, the teacher will send a note to the parents describing the items that may be brought in and the specific day the item should be brought to school. If your child tells you that he/she is supposed to bring a certain item to school but you have not received a note, talk to the classroom teacher about your child's statements.

Communication With Your Child's Teacher

A consistent communication flow with your child's teachers is highly desirable for your child's success in our program and should be the principle vehicle for all questions that arise. If you are wondering or concerned about anything regarding your child, call or send a note to your child's teacher. **Talking to your child's teacher should be the first and main avenue for handling all concerns about your child since the teacher is with your child during the school day and consistently observes and monitors your child's development.** All teachers are more than happy to speak with a parent about a particular situation, your child's progress, or general classroom questions. Each teacher will let you know their available times for telephone calls and parent-teacher conferences. You can also communicate via email using the teacher's email address.

If you have approached and spoken to your child's teacher and do not feel the situation was handled in the best interest of all parties, you may then contact the school administrator to further discuss the situation. The teachers communicate with the administrator regularly on students and events in their classroom. We will work together to ensure problems and situations are handled properly and to the benefit of all involved. All calls should be made through the school office at 708-339-4274. You may also e-mail us at larenmontessori@sbcglobal.net, but calls, notes, or emails to the teachers are preferred.

Classroom Folder: Every week on the last day of the week your child will bring home a folder. The folder will contain all paper related work your child has done during that week. Please go through the folder. Take everything out with your child. Talk with your child about the work that he/she has done. Discussing your child's work shows you what he/she has done, helps your child reinforce and review skills learned, and shows your child that their work is important to you. A parent's opinion and feelings matter so much to a child. If there is not much in the folder in the way of work/papers/projects, please do not be upset or concerned. Much of the work in the classroom is manipulative that the child works with but obviously does not bring home with them.

The folder will also contain notes and forms from your child's teacher and office personnel.

Read them! Notice which forms need to be returned and by what date. If you have any questions or confusion about any note or form do not hesitate to call the school office to speak to Laren Staff.

Weekly Email update of the upcoming week's reminders

Parent-Teacher Conferences/Observation:

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled a minimum of twice per school year.

1. The first conference is in November/December and the second is in April/May. It will be a 15 minutes meeting with each teacher to discuss your child's progress in all classroom and developmental area.
2. The observation day in the month of February or March. Each parent chooses a day to come to their child's classroom and observe the class for 30-45 minutes with a follow-up email if necessary about observation and your child's continued progress.

Teacher and parents may set up additional conference/meetings as the need arises. Teachers are always willing to set up a time before or after school.

Progress Reports: You will receive a written progress report for your child 2 times throughout the year in November/December and at the end of the school year

Classroom and School News: Three times per year your child's teacher will create a one page newsletter informing parents of work, activities, happenings, and events that have occurred in their classroom during a 2 month time span. These newsletters will be sent home in the folder or posted on the *Laren Parent Corner* section of the Laren Montessori School website, which is accessed at www.larenmontessori.org. If you would like a printed copy of the newsletter one will be made available for you. Every week in your child's Montessori classroom folder, you will receive one page of *Notes from the Office*. This notice will inform and remind you of important events and dates occurring in the upcoming week. They are a very useful way to remind you of what is going on at school. At times the Notes from the Office may include items submitted by Laren parents, such as news/magazine articles relating to children that may be helpful to you, links to useful websites, activities to do at home with your children, and information about local or Chicago events that you can attend with your family.

Another very helpful tool is the school calendar. Each family receives a full year calendar before the school year begins. Every month you will also receive a monthly calendar to remind you of events, days off, hot lunch, and due dates and to update you of any changes for that month. **POST THIS MONTHLY CALENDAR WHERE YOU CAN REFER TO IT REGULARLY!!!!** This monthly calendar is your reminder of everything going on.

Evening Parent Meetings and Family Events:

Throughout the school year our school will host evening meetings and events for Laren parents and/or students to attend. These events are an opportunity for you to gather with teachers and other Laren families to understand Laren Montessori, receive information, and meet other Laren parents. Topics for these events include:

PARENT MONTESSORI TRAINING (TBA): It is very important for the success of Laren students in our program that Laren parents understand our expectations for their child in the classroom and the methods and materials children are working with daily. On a Friday evening in September we hold a mandatory Parent Montessori Education session. One or both parents of every student must come to their child's Montessori classroom to work with their child's teacher and learn about the Montessori environment and materials, our rules and procedures, and what your child is doing in the classroom. For you to help us and your child, parents need to understand what Montessori is all about and the best way to achieve that is by becoming an active part of the classroom for at least that one evening, to experience it for yourself.

FAMILY NIGHT: In October on a Friday evening with mom and/or dad Laren students and come to the classroom to enjoy some work time together. This is a special bonding and sharing time for Laren students and their dads to work together in the classroom, for mom and dad to see what their child is working on and to better understand what students are doing in the Montessori classroom. Classroom time is followed by refreshments with other Laren families.

Curriculum

The handbook outlines the curriculum for Laren Montessori School. It is divided into the areas of development and learning and lists all skills that your child can accomplish during their time at Laren Montessori.

Attendance and Health Policies

To further help teach your child the importance of school and education and of meeting commitments and responsibilities we value regular attendance at school. Emergencies and illnesses do arise that prevent a child from coming to school on certain days, but in general children should attend school everyday it is open to ensure successful development in all areas. If your child will be absent from school on a given day, the parent must notify the school so we know not to expect your child that day.

Illness:

If your child is sick we ask that you do not bring them to school. This is for your child's benefit to allow them to rest and recuperate and for the benefit of all other Laren students to ensure they do not get sick. The following is a list of symptoms to guide you in deciding whether your child should come to school. DO NOT send your child to school if he/she has the following:

- 1) fever – temperature over 99 degrees
- 2) rash – such as ringworm, which is very contagious – all rashes must be looked at by a doctor to be given proper diagnosis and medical treatment
- 3) consistent cough and/or sore throat
- 4) severe cold/runny nose with profuse amounts of discharge from the nose and/or eyes
- 5) diarrhea
- 6) vomiting

If your child is sick and will not be able to come to school due to the illness, you must call the school and inform us of the condition or illness. We notify all Laren families of any contagious illness present in the school so they can watch for symptoms in their own child.

If your child is sick and is taken to the doctor for their illness or contagious condition, you MUST submit a doctor's note allowing the child to return to school, verifying diagnosis and proper treatment, to ensure that the child will not be contagious.

Illness or Injury While At School:

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she will be removed from the classroom and taken to the school office and offered a cot to rest upon. The parents will be notified immediately and asked to pick up their child. If the parents cannot be reached we will then contact an authorized person listed on the child's emergency card which is kept on file in the school office. A parent or authorized person must be able to pick up the child within ½ hour of our call. Children who are ill are very uncomfortable and need mom, dad, or another caregiver's attention.

If your child is injured at school, school personnel will give immediate, appropriate, and reasonable care to the child. Laren Montessori staff members are certified in CPR and first aid. We will make the child feel as comfortable and secure as possible. If there is a noticeable or prominent mark to the child's body school personnel will contact the parent to make them aware of the situation and condition so they are not surprised when they see the marked/injured area at pickup time. If it is determined that a physician's care is necessary, the parents will be contacted immediately and briefed of the situation so they can pick up their child. If the child needs immediate care and the parents are unavailable, the paramedics will be called. Laren Montessori does not sponsor student accident insurance. In the event of a school related accident, your family will be responsible for coverage through your own personal insurance carrier.

Snack and Supplies

Snack:

In the Montessori classroom a snack is put out everyday in the snack area. The children are free at any point during class time to have a snack with a few of their classmates. The children learn to wash their hands thoroughly, prepare their snack tray with food and drink, and to clean up their area and supplies upon completion of their snack. The students enrolled in the full day preschool program will also have a snack in the traditional portion of their day.

Each parent will have turns to provide snack items for their child's class for two or more times during the school year. You will be provided with a list at the start of the year to inform you of when your snack weeks will occur. One week before your turn you will receive a list of snack items needed for the classroom. You will then receive a second reminder in your child's folder the Friday before your snack week.

Classroom Supplies:

Each classroom uses several paper products, cleaning agents, and other items throughout the year. Each parent will have turns to provide these supply items for their child's classroom. The following is a list of items you may be asked to supply:

paper towels	washcloths	fresh flowers
a box of Kleenex	handsoap	dixie cups
napkins	a box of bandaids	cleaning supplies
toilet paper	Ziploc bags	dishwasher detergent
garbage bags	food coloring	etc.

You will be provided a list at the start of the school year to inform you of when your supply weeks will occur. One week before your turn you will receive a list of supplies needed for the classroom. You will then receive a second reminder in your child's folder the Friday before your supply week. Your snack week and supply week will not be the same week to ensure your expense is not too large at one time.

School Supplies:

Full day students will need specific school supplies for daily work. A list of these supplies is given prior to the start of the school year and the supplies should be brought with the child on or preferably before the first full day of school.

Lunch

Full day students eat lunch everyday at school sometime between 11:30a.m. and 12:45p.m. Your child must bring their lunch to school each day. The lunch should be brought to school in a standard size lunch box or bag labeled with your child's first and last name. Food in your child's lunch must be able to be eaten right out of the lunch box. Typically students bring a sandwich with accompanying sides (i.e. fruit, cut up vegetables, a granola bar, raisins, etc.) Your child should help prepare his/her lunch for school. This is a wonderful opportunity to help your child develop more responsibility and to help him/her learn how to choose nutritious foods from the four food groups that build strong bodies and minds. If your child helps choose the food items for his/her lunch you can also ensure that the food will be liked and eaten. Do not include foods with a high sugar content, such as candy. Any inappropriate food items sent in a lunchbox will be sent home.

All items must be able to be consumed right from the lunchbox. We do not warm any foods. If you would like to send cooked food (i.e. soup, spaghetti or other pasta, etc.) you may send it in a thermos and at lunchtime your child will be given a bowl to transfer the contents for eating. You must also include a beverage with your child's lunch. If you need a food item to be refrigerated (i.e. milk, yogurt, etc.) tape a written note to the outside of your child's lunchbox stating this request and the item will be placed into our school refrigerator until lunchtime.

Any food that is left at the end of the lunch time which your child has not eaten will be sent home each day in his/her lunchbox. This helps you to know how much your child is eating for lunch and what food items he/she may not really like.

Friday Lunch Program: Every Friday all full day students can purchase a lunch. This lunch will consist of a main item (i.e. pizza, sandwich, hot dog, etc.) that will vary from week to week along with a fruit, vegetable, and beverage.

Birthdays

A birthday is a celebration of life: a celebration of living, growing, and learning for another wonderful year. Therefore, children's birthdays are celebrated in the classroom. A birthday is a very exciting, proud day especially for the person celebrating it. If you prefer for your child not to have his/her birthday acknowledged or for him/her not to be present in the classroom while another child's birthday is celebrated please inform your child's teacher of your wishes and they will be accommodated.

Many children like to bring a snack to share with classmates on their birthday. These special snacks are welcome and are put out on the snack table, but we do have some restrictions:

- a. **Do not** send high sugar content snacks such as bakery cupcakes which have a ½ inch of frosting. Children's eyes may enjoy them, but most of their tummies cannot handle all that frosting and cake. Much of the cupcake is wasted.

- b. **Do not** send a whole birthday cake. Birthday treats should be individual to make it easier on the teachers to distribute.

Suggestions for birthday snack/treat for the class:

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|--|---------------------------------|
| 1) mini muffins | 5) rice krispie treats |
| 2) butter cookies | 6) individual bags of trail mix |
| 3) small boxes of raisins | 7) individual ice cream cups |
| 4) a tray of cut up fruit – apples, oranges, bananas | |

Some parents prefer to send a gift for the class on their child’s birthday instead of a snack. Giving a gift to others on your own birthday helps to reinforce that giving and thinking of others is important and unselfish. On our birthday we receive many gifts so it’s nice to “give” a gift also. Suggestions for class birthday gifts:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1) a book | 4) a new work for the classroom |
| 2) a puzzle | 5) a Teacher’s Store gift certificate |
| 3) children’s music CD | |

Birthday snacks/treats/gifts are optional; they are a treat not a necessity. You are not required to send anything in for your child’s birthday.

Additionally, please be advised ***that providing a birthday lunch for students in your child’s class is not allowed or encouraged.*** We at Laren prefer the Celebration of Life to occur with the classroom hours, leaving lunch and recess to occur as they normally would.

Outside of school birthday parties:

Laren does not associated with any party or event held for the child; our school does not involve itself with personal parties outside of school. ***Therefore, we CANNOT allow students to hand out invitations at school or send out e-vites on behalf of the student to parents.*** This is done to avoid hurt feelings for children not invited. Additionally, if you plan to invite your child’s classmates to his/her party, you must acquire those addresses ***on your own time.*** Laren Montessori School cannot assist with that process nor can we legally release address lists for other families to view. ***These matters should be discussed and planned on your own personal time and not at school with the teachers or administrator. Again, Laren cannot oblige any student in terms of birthday parties or other personal events.***

Holidays

Holidays are not emphasized in the Montessori classroom in the sense of a traditional school holiday celebration. We do not have classroom parties for Halloween, Christmas, or Easter. The traditional classes will participate in some holiday celebrations. Holidays are a part of many people’s lives and beliefs. We do teach our students about the holidays from a historical and cultural perspective to help them understand their origins and how people celebrate. The children will naturally talk about the holidays and will become excited as these special days approach. Each teacher may put out materials related to the holidays, but work with them is done on an individual basis. For full day students, in their traditional classroom, the teacher may add holiday projects and activities. Children in all classrooms will make seasonal gifts for their parents at Christmas time and for Mother’s Day to express the love and appreciation the child has for their parent. Giving to others and expressing your feelings is important.

Valentine's Day is a day to share with friends and show them that you value and appreciate their friendship. The children will celebrate this Friendship Day in their classrooms. The children will celebrate this Friendship Day in their classrooms. Students will be allowed to bring in Valentine's Day cards; however we do not encourage students to bring candy or treats for their friends since Laren does encourage a healthy lifestyle. Remember, this day is to remind students to care, share, and love one another.

Fire Drills and Tornado Drills

Laren Montessori School works closely with the South Holland Fire Department to ensure our school and our students are always safe. In October fire fighters from the Fire Department come to our school and give a wonderful presentation to our students about fire fighters and fire safety. With the help of their adorable electronic fire truck, Freddy, our students learn about the fire fighter's equipment and uniform, what to do with matches or lighters if they find them, and what to do if their house or clothes catch on fire. The finale is the much anticipated tour of the fire truck. In May we might take our annual trip to the fire station where all of these important lessons are reinforced to ensure students remember the life saving skills.

Beginning in September our students learn how to evacuate the school in case of a fire. We hold fire drills every week during the months of September, October, and November (until it gets too cold). We resume the drills again in March and continue through the end of the school year. Students learn the importance of staying calm, walking quickly to the exit, and staying with their class during the drill. Parents should be performing fire drills at home also and talking to their child about the drills at school.

In March our students begin learning about tornadoes and how to stay safe during this type of storm. We hold tornado drills weekly during the spring and summer months.

Clothing

We recommend the children wear comfortable clothing in which they can move freely. Laren staff members are here to help with zippers, buttons, snaps, buckles, and laces. Each day the children will be working to learn to fasten all these items themselves. It is very important that you allow your child time to practice with fastening their clothing openings and closures. They will learn how to zip, button, snap, and tie if they are given the opportunity. Each day upon entering and leaving the classroom the children are responsible for hanging up, putting on, taking off, and fastening their jackets, coats, sweaters, and other belongings.

We ask that you avoid:

- 1) belts on pants. Buckles are very difficult to open when you are in a hurry to use the washroom. Children often wait too long when involved in an activity they enjoy.
- 2) leotards or tights under clothes. Again it is very difficult for a child to remove all of these layers of clothing in time when they have waited too long to use the toilet.
- 3) slippery dress shoes, sandals, and flip flops. Girls especially love to wear cute dressy shoes and sandals when it is warm. These types of shoes are very dangerous both inside and outside the classroom during movement. All children should wear a sturdy, rubber soled leather or gym shoe.

As wet clothing accidents will happen when children wait too long or if they get wet in the practical life area of the classroom where we use a lot of water, each student needs to have an extra change of clothes in the classroom. Send a shirt, pair of underpants, pants, and pair of socks in a large Ziploc bag with your child's name on it. The bag will be kept in the washroom or other designated area in the classroom. Even older children (kindergarteners) need a change of clothes at times. If your child's clothes get wet, he/she will be given his/her change of clothes to put on. The wet/soiled clothes will be sent home in a bag. The next day parents will need to send a new extra change of clothes for their child to keep at school. If a child has a wet clothing accident and there is no change of clothes for the child, the parent will be called to bring the child a change of clothes.

For students in the full day preschool and kindergarten programs:

Full day students go outside everyday, unless it is raining or below 20 degrees. Parents need to get in the habit of checking the weather daily to ensure you send jackets if it will be cool.

In the wintertime when snow begins to fall the full day students will need to have the following:

- 1) warm winter coat
- 2) winter hat – not a baseball cap
- 3) mittens or gloves
- 4) scarf – for cheeks and neck
- 5) snow boots – not leather or hiking boots – they must be a boot made of water resistant material (rubber/vinyl) that comes up to the child's mid calf area on the leg
- 6) snowpants – children love to get in the snow and we will not allow them to do so if they do not have snowpants

During wintertime, you are welcome to send a pair of slippers or shoes to leave at school. By doing so your child can wear his/her snow boots to school and he/she will already have something at school to put on his/her feet. Hence, you do not have to remember to bring the shoes/slippers to and from school each day. Slippers must be small and cover the child's entire foot – no big character headed slippers or those that have no backing.

LABEL EVERYTHING! You must put your child's first and last name in every article of clothing he/she wears to school – jacket, snow pants, boots, etc. Children will not always remember which items are theirs and we see a lot of duplicate items that children mix up and mistake for their own.

Fundraisers

As mentioned earlier in this handbook, if your child is enrolled by September, all parents are required to participate in our **mandatory** fundraiser by selling taffy apples during September and October participating in World's Finest Chocolate sales in February, and volunteering their time for the annual show (Variety Show/Cultural Taste of Laren) in the spring.

Keep in mind, fundraisers supplement our budget. If the fundraisers are profitable the tuition remains low. Our goal is not to raise tuition each year. As fundraisers improve that goal is being met. They include:

- 1) World's Finest Chocolate Fundraiser: This is a mandatory fundraiser, but the appeal of the chocolate is easy to sell and delicious to eat. Every year we will be selling World's Finest Chocolate Variety Packs. Each candy bar will sell for \$1.00 and **each case has 60 candy bars**. If you choose not to sell the

chocolate bars you will pay the school \$120 buyout fee instead of selling candy which is due by the end of the fundraiser.

- 2) Annual Winter Concert and Spring Show: Each year our school hosts a talent show starring the students of Laren Montessori. All students are going to participate in this event. Each class sings/recites songs/poems as a group. After school programs will also join in to sing a song or recite a poem, perform a dance or, play a musical instrument. The show is a tremendous event which is enjoyed by all.
- 3) Annual or every other year Taste of Laren: Each year in the spring our school hosts this beautiful cultural food and entertainment event on a Saturday from 4-7pm. All Laren families are required to help in some way with this event and are given a choice as to how they will assist. All Laren families, their relatives and friends, and members of the community are encouraged to attend and enjoy food from around the world. Event attendees required admission fee and purchase food tickets which they redeem at the food tables.
- 4) Bake Sale: Each year, along with family night, Laren hosts a bake sale. We sell books and other items to raise money to purchase new books and materials for our classrooms.
- 5) Box Tops for Education: families collect box tops from General Mills products and we receive 10 cents cash per top. If enough tops are collected, it does add up.
- 6) Staples – Recycle for Education: Turn in your empty computer ink cartridges to our school and Staples will give us \$3 per cartridge. These funds help us replace old and abused classroom material.

Thank you so much for your commitment and support! We truly appreciate all you can do!

Kindergarten Graduation

Every year the kindergarten students culminate their early childhood level at Laren Montessori with a beautiful graduation ceremony. This sentimental event is planned by a parent committee along with the school administrator and is held at a location large enough to accommodate our graduating class and their families. The 45 minute ceremony takes place the day after the last day of school.

The graduation committee plans the theme, décor, refreshments, photography, and videography of the event. An all kindergarten parent graduation meeting is held in April to inform kindergarten parents of these plans and of their graduation fee. Each kindergarten parent is required to pay the graduation fee which is calculated by taking the total cost of all purchases for the various aspects of the graduation and dividing it among the total number of graduates. Kindergarten parents can offer to donate a specific part of the plans (i.e. a fruit tray; cups, plates, and napkins; etc.) or the money needed to cover a specific portion of the event. These generous donations then reduce the fee required by each parent.

Laren Montessori's annual kindergarten graduation is a wonderful and very memorable for everyone involved – students, parents, families, and teachers. It is a beautiful way to complete this first phase of your child's education.

Summer Program

Summer is a time for fun and play but children still need to consistently reinforce the skills and lessons learned. Laren Montessori's summer school program is offered to all current students. The program is an extension of the school year to keep the children's learning consistent and progressing during the summer months. Students continue with the same work, processes, and routines as during the regular school year half of their time in the morning.

Our summer session is an 8, 9, or 10 week program (varying based on the school calendar each year), beginning approximately a week after the regular school year ends. Students attend full day from 8:45a.m.-3:30p.m., spending ½ day in the Montessori environment and ½ day in group summer activities including outdoor water play, sports, games, gardening, and thematic projects. Before and after school care is available during the summer program.

Each week of the summer program has a theme. Many activities in the classroom are related to that theme. There is a field trip scheduled almost every week to facilities such as Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum, Sand Ridge Nature Center, Chicago Nature Museum, Chicago Children's Museum, a Pick-your-own Fruit Farm, Lincoln Park Zoo, and Wicker Park water amusement center, among others. Field trips usually coordinate with the weekly theme. Permission slips and field trip fees are required for a child to attend each field trip.

The lunch program is almost the same as with the regular school year. Children bring their own lunch every day.

Snack is put out each day in the a.m. Montessori environment and a group snack is given to all children in the afternoon. As with the regular school year, each child (parent) is asked to bring snack and supply items one or two times during the summer school program.

Summer program enrollment forms are sent out to all current families in March. The form and initial deposit must be turned in by April. The remaining summer program tuition and fees are due during the months of June and July. Summer school tuition is comparable to our regular school year tuition.

Opportunities are available for students to sign up for sport lessons, such as tennis, during the summer program. Sport lessons are given on school grounds one day per week during the summer program by qualified instructors. Enrollment forms are sent home to all summer school students and fees are paid directly to the lesson instructor.