



Partnership Agreement

“What is it that you can expect of Hillside Montessori?” and “What will Hillside Montessori expect of you?” Those are the questions to which this agreement responds.

The intention of the agreement is to communicate as clearly as possible what we can expect of each other. Whether this is your first year at the school or your tenth, we ask you to read the Partnership Agreement, reflect on its contents, and then sign the agreement in Transparent Classroom. It is the foundation of the school-family relationship. Communication is at the heart of the matter.

We are committed to building a strong partnership in support of each student in the school. We believe the best way to achieve this partnership is through shared goals, effective communication, and involvement by all parties.

What does the school expect of parents?

What is the most basic expectation the school has of parents?

Make continuing efforts both to understand and to embrace the Montessori approach and to work in partnership with the school.

These efforts should begin before admission. The school desires parents who understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education as part of the admission process—so that parents can make an informed decision in choosing to enroll their children—and continue to provide more opportunities throughout a family’s years at the school. Once children are enrolled, the school expects parents to attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences and parent education events, and to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Family Handbook and other school publications.

Children thrive when home and school work in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations.

How can parents positively support the school community?

Demonstrate respect for all adults and children, the school, and the school’s programs and policies.

Model for your children respect—for them, their classmates, parents of classmates, teachers and other school staff—in short, for everyone associated with the school. Respect begins with civility and deepens into trust. Our most fundamental behavioral guidelines for the children are, “respect yourself, respect others, and respect the environment.” We expect the same from adults, parents, and school staff, at all times and in all relationships

within the school community. This includes speech and outward behavior. Support your child by speaking positively about their teachers, classmates, and school. Respect and abide by the school's policies and procedures. Honor your commitments. Look for ways to make a positive contribution to the life of the school.

Through your behavior, you contribute to your children's moral development and to the culture and climate of their school, which they experience on a daily basis.

How can I create consistency between home and school?

Strive to parent according to Montessori principles.

Learn as much as you can about Montessori principles as they apply to preparation of your child's home environment. This begins with the general principle, "Never do something for your child that he can do for himself." Allow your child to engage in all of the simple tasks of practical life that a child can do for itself at each stage of development. Montessori education may also entail learning a communication style different from the way in which we were parented.

Children develop a love of learning and become responsible, independent, and capable when parents' values and expectations are consistent with those of the school.

What are my responsibilities regarding communication between home and school?

Maintain active, direct and respectful, two-way communication with the school.

Read communications that are sent home, including emails, letters, newsletters, and calendars. Inform the school in a timely fashion of pertinent changes in your child's life. Active communication involves parents sharing observations and concerns about their child with the child's current teacher. In matters large and small, remember the principle of respect: even when there is disagreement, disagree respectfully.

Children prosper most when the primary voices in their lives work together in their best interest.

How can I support my child's growth and development?

Strive to help your child develop a healthy mind and a healthy body.

Be aware of and follow age-appropriate recommendations for technology use and screen time. Brain research shows that unhealthy use of technology can affect children's natural development as well as their ability to focus and thrive in the classroom and form thriving relationships.

Provide your children with a healthy, balanced diet so they may grow and develop into their best selves. Make sure they have time for physical activity, outdoor play, and "down time."

Healthy minds and bodies are necessary so that children may reach their fullest potential.

What can parents expect of the school?

What can I expect from the school academically?

Hillside aspires to fulfill its mission as a Montessori school.

As a Montessori school, we are different from conventional schools. Our first commitment is to the multi-dimensional development of the child. Montessori children do amass a great deal of factual knowledge in school. However, our aim is for each child to be far more than a repository of this information: we guide each child to think for herself. Cognitive development and a solid academic foundation are important, yet they represent only one dimension of our aspirations for your child. Equally significant is your child's social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development.

Children are given choices and a great deal of freedom—within limits—during the school day. The choices a child makes, and the accompanying responsibilities, influence the emerging character of your child. Choosing their own work or shaping it to a considerable degree, following that work through to completion, while working independently or in cooperation with others, the Montessori child identifies their interests and develops their individual gifts.

Significant emphasis is placed upon community service. Younger children learn by serving their small community, e.g. classmates, classroom, and family. As they grow, children reach out to the larger community and experience the many rewards of helping others. The children gain awareness and appreciation of others, of the challenges faced by others, and equally importantly, of their own strengths and abilities to help others and affect the world around them. Community service is an integral and important part of their lives, and stays with them well beyond their Hillside years.

We treat each child with dignity and respect, and expect that they will treat all others with the same respect. We treat each child as an individual and strive to develop each child's unique gifts—within the context of the classroom and the school community. With freedom comes responsibility, and each child learns to balance their personal freedom with a clear sense of responsibility to self, to others, and to the community as a whole.

What can I expect from the school in terms of communication?

We aim to maintain open, honest, timely, and respectful communication with you about your child and about information affecting the school community.

There are two regularly scheduled parent-teacher (or in the case of older students, parent-teacher-student) conferences each year, accompanied by conference reports for each semester. In the event of special concerns, your child's teacher will contact you to discuss these concerns by phone, by email, or in person. In addition to conference reporting, classroom teachers will communicate with you via daily classroom emails and short reports as needed for individual children.

Each Hillside lead teacher is a well-trained professional and evaluations are confidential and based on direct observation of your child. Teachers will always offer their current best understanding of your child's progress and her strengths and needs. For all children, this evaluation is based on the teacher's observation and direct work with the child. For Elementary - Adolescent students (2nd-8th grades), we also report to you ITBS test results.

Regarding ongoing, school-wide communication, the school sends a weekly email called A Week in the Life of Hillside Montessori, a monthly newsletter called The Hillside Post, as well as the school calendar and other occasional letters, emails, and publications.

What can I expect of the school environment?

We strive to ensure an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and supportive, as well as aesthetically beautiful.

Dr. Montessori said that the classroom teacher's first responsibility is to prepare the environment. This means that the learning materials should correspond to the developmental characteristics of the child at each level, and that those materials must be attractive to the child: correct in size, aesthetically pleasing, well maintained, and complete. More broadly, the whole school environment must meet these criteria: to appeal to the child and to inspire their work.

We are ever vigilant to ensure that the school building and grounds are physically safe, secure, and well maintained.

Our community of children and adults comprise a social environment and culture that impacts the child's experience. We strive to make this environment emotionally supportive and safe for every child. This does not mean that there are no problems. It does mean that we will work with your child in developmentally appropriate ways to deal with problems as they arise, empowering them with social skills and aiding them in the development of emotional intelligence to prepare for a lifetime of working with others in different communities and organizations.

What professional standards can I expect of the school and faculty?

The school seeks accreditation and consultation from organizations with high standards in the realm of private school education.

The school is accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC). For guidance in implementing Montessori principles, we rely on the American Montessori Society (AMS) and are an affiliate member of the organization. We are also licensed by Bright from the Start (BFTS), the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

In most cases, lead teachers hold a bachelor's degree, at minimum, as well as a Montessori credential from a MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Training) accredited training institute. In some cases, a teacher may be in the process of completing a credential or degree and will be working under the guidance of

a credentialed trainer/mentor. Our teachers have a sense of mission in working with children and adolescents and demonstrate high standards for themselves and their students.

The school promotes a culture of professional growth. Teachers are supported by the school in earning at least ten hours of professional development credit annually and are encouraged to participate in book studies, read professional publications, and collaborate with peers internally and from other schools.

What can I expect of the school administration?

Integrity; a focus on the needs of the individual child in harmony with the life of the community; mission-driven decisions embodying good stewardship and responsible management; and an open door to your questions or concerns.

Administrative staff interface with all the various constituencies of the school: students, parents, extended family, faculty, trustees, alumni, prospective parents, former parents, professional visitors, government officials, other schools and educational organizations, vendors, and the general public. In your interactions with administration, you can expect professional, courteous, and business-like conduct, as well as mutually respectful communication.

The head of school, administrative assistant, and office manager comprise the current administration. They often face decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well-intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, the administration will focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the school.