

Élan Vital Montessori Parent Handbook

 2010—2011



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FALL 2010



élan vital MONTESSORI SCHOOL Inc.
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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Enrollment and Tuition

We welcome you and your children to our outstanding facilities and programs. In this handbook, you will learn more about Élan Vital Montessori and what is expected from school parents and children. We hope this handbook will encourage your enthusiastic participation in our programs and activities.

Families of enrolled children must be willing to make a strong commitment to their child's education and a commitment to the School's mission and education. Commitment to the School's mission and educational philosophy manifests itself in the signing of the registration forms at time of admission.

Pre-Admission Tour and Visit

Parents are invited to visit our school to meet our certified and trained staff and to observe our teachers and students in the classroom prior to enrollment. Since it allows Élan Vital Montessori to control the number of interruptions to the classroom on any given day, tours and observations are scheduled in advance. On the tour, interested families are given an overview of Élan Vital Montessori, our philosophy, educational methods, and a tour of our facility. Additional reading material is given for review at home. With this review, parents can ensure that Élan Vital Montessori is a quality choice for their family and that their choice is a commitment for involvement in the community.

Enrollment

Upon your decision to enroll your child, Élan Vital Montessori requires a non-refundable enrollment fee to cover administrative costs and student materials at the time of registration along with a completed and signed registration form and contract. Each new student is admitted under a six week provisional period.

Enrollment at Élan Vital Montessori requires a family commitment for the academic year. As we are a school environment and not a day care facility, we do not offer limited enrollment for short periods of time (by month or by week). This allows our classes to remain consistent and for the class to grow as a group academically. All enrolled families are expected to maintain their commitment for the entire school year. Re-enrollment is held each April for the following school year program.

Families wishing to enroll for Summer Session confirm their space in May. Notice must be made in writing and submitted to the school office.

Required Admission Forms

Upon your decision to enroll your student at Élan Vital Montessori, you will be asked to complete the following forms. Completion of these signed forms is required prior to your child's first day of attendance:

- Contract
- Parent Authorization Form
- Injury Release Form
- Photo Release Form
- Medical Form
- Immunization Status Form
- Family Service Agreement

Tuition Rates and School Fees

Your tuition rate will be verified at the time of student admission and is documented on the registration form. School and extended day hours are calculated into tuition rates beginning each school year in August. Tuition rates are revised each January for the next new school year. Please direct all payment questions to the school Director.

Payment Plan: Parents are required to pay for the time their child/children are scheduled to be in school and/or Extended Care. Payment is required for reserved space regardless of attendance. Payment is due in advance and payment must be received prior to service. Payment plans are selected at the time of registration. Payment plans may be changed by contacting the office and must be initialed and dated on the contract.

Monthly Payment Option: Tuition is due on the 1st of every month for services of that month. A late fee of \$10.00 per day will be charged after the 5th of every month. Late fees are charged to your account each day payment is late. Payment for all late fees is due when you pay your tuition. All families are expected to keep their accounts current.

Holidays: Fees are not reduced during months that have holidays. Our rates include allowances for all holidays, including Winter and Spring break.

Vacations: You will be required to pay 100% of your regular rate while you are on vacation. Your class placement and enrollment are continuous while you are on vacation.

School Breaks: These breaks are outlined on the school calendar yearly. Consult this year's calendar for specific dates. Our School Program is closed during these dates. School breaks are calculated into the tuition cost and no tuition credit or discount is given for these dates.

Payment Penalties:

- You will be billed for late payment at \$10.00 per day. If fees remain unpaid after a period of 10 days, your child will not be admitted to school until all fees are paid in full. If fees remain unpaid after 15 days, your enrollment contract will be terminated. Élan Vital Montessori reserves the right to send unpaid accounts delinquent more than 15 days to a collection agency.
- You will be billed \$25.00 for any NSF checks plus any bank costs incurred by Élan Vital Montessori. Cash payment is required for returned checks. We reserve the right to place accounts on a cash only basis after the second NSF check.
- You will be billed \$1.00 per minute for the first late pick-up from school after 3:15 p.m. or Extended Care after 5:30 p.m. within 30 days. The second late pickup will be billed at the rate of \$2.00 per minute. Late pickups commencing with the third occurrence must be addressed directly with the School Director.
- Half day students will be billed \$1.00 per minute for the first late pick-up from school after 11:45 a.m. The second late pickup will be billed at the rate of \$2.00 per minute. Late pickups commencing with the third occurrence must be addressed directly with the School Director.

Withdrawal Policy:

Since payment rates for School Day and Extended Care are set at time of registration and are due in advance each month, **30 day written notice is required to withdraw your child.** An exit interview will also be requested.

Please contact the school office to settle all financial arrangements when withdrawing a student. Once withdrawn, Élan Vital Montessori will fill the space vacated with a new incoming student or an advancing student.

Families enrolled in the School Day program may elect to withdraw for the Summer Session in its entirety. Notice of intent to withdraw for the Summer Session should be made by May 15 in writing to the School Director.

Families withdrawing from Élan Vital Montessori with the intention of avoiding payment for an extended family vacation or other personal reasons, will not be re-admitted to Élan Vital Montessori, as this behavior undermines the educational process and disturbs the class structure. Élan Vital Montessori follows an academic year, August to June.

Early Withdrawal Penalties:

Failure to correctly notify Élan Vital Montessori of student withdrawal will result in 100% of following month's tuition to be due.

The following are conditions that will cause School Day or Extended Care services to be terminated:

- Continual late payments or continual late pick-ups (more than three within a one month period).
- Child behavioral problems deterring successful school experiences. Disrespect of the School Day or Extended Care setting, policies, and staff.
- Sporadic attendance.
- Consistently arriving after 8:30 am and disturbing the educational process.

Receipts and Taxes

You will receive a statement at the end of the year reflecting all tuition paid. You will receive a form reporting your annual childcare expendi-

tures for the applicable tax year. Élan Vital Montessori's Federal Identification Number is 20-5098093.

Notice of Non-discriminatory Policy

Élan Vital Montessori does not discriminate in enrollment, hiring practices, or in the care of children based on race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic-economic status, or religion.

Religious Activities

Élan Vital Montessori is not affiliated with any religious organization.

The School Experience

Parent Orientation

All parents or legal guardians of incoming students are recommended to attend a Parent Orientation to gain a better understanding of Montessori, the school day, school policies, and school procedures.

Parent Education Nights are also offered from time to time and will be announced in the Newsletter. (Due to the nature of these meetings, students are not allowed to attend.)

Transitioning in

According to common Montessori practice, students will be **transitioned-in** during the first week of school. Beneficial to all children, this process entails starting the first day of classes with only a small segment of students, typically new students. Additional students are added a few at a time on subsequent days until the class is complete. Transitioning-in students allows teachers to spend important additional time on a one-to-one basis with each child during the first days at school. This allows important routines to be established and helps the child feel more comfortable with school. Parents will be notified before school begins of their child's start date.

Please do not request that your returning student be phased in early! Plan ahead to make any necessary child-care arrangements during the phase-in week. Remember, when your child was a new student, they were given the benefit of this important additional time.

Hours of Operation

Élan Vital Montessori is open Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with Administrative Office hours of 8:00 am. to 12:00 pm. Extended Care is available from 7:30 until 5:30 daily.

Parents are welcome to visit the classroom, at any time during the school day, as long as they check in first with the School Director. However, teachers and staff will not be able to give you individual attention if you do not schedule time to visit with them prior to the day of your visit. Teachers, assistants, and Extended Care staff have a primary responsibility to the children in their care.

School Day Program

The School Day program operates from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. daily. Students enrolled in School Day are required to attend during the entire school year. Please consult your school calendar for start and end dates of the school year.

Regular attendance at school is critically important to our program. Arriving on time is respectful to teachers, assistants, and to classmates since lessons begin at 8:30 am. Families who repeatedly arrive late or maintain sporadic attendance will be asked to reconsider their commitment to their child's education at Élan Vital Montessori.

Extended Care Program

Students enrolled in the Extended Care program are admitted at school between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. daily. At the time of registration, families are required to specify approximately what times the student will arrive and leave Extended Care each day.

Summer Session

Élan Vital Montessori operates on an academic year. The dates for the academic year are set each year in April, as are the dates for Summer Session. Consult this year's academic calendar for specific dates. School Day Families have the option to withdraw for the Summer Session in its entirety. All families committed in writing to the Summer Session by or on May 15 will have secured a placement. Tuition rates are not discounted in Summer and no vacation credits are given. Without written confirmation, Élan Vital Montessori will consider School and Extended Care students not enrolled for the Summer Session.

School Closures

Élan Vital Montessori will be closed in observance of the following holidays: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Mardi Gras, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. If a holiday falls on a weekend, we will be closed on Monday or Friday, whichever is the legal holiday. In addition, we will close for Spring Break and Parent Teacher Conferences. Please consult your school calendar for the specific dates this year.

Arrival and Dismissal

We strive to keep the atmosphere within the school and classrooms child-centered. It is disturbing to children when parents linger in or near the classroom. It is specifically for this reason that the following arrival and departure arrangements are followed.

For arrivals between 8:00 - 8:30, pull up in the school driveway and drop-off your child at the school entrance. We ask that you remain in your car and wait your turn in line until a staff member approaches your car to greet your child. Please have all of your child's personal belongings easily accessible.

For arrivals before or after this timeframe, please park in the parking lot and escort the child inside the building, ensuring that a staff member has received the child.

When leaving the buildings, make sure front doors are completely closed. When leaving the school grounds, always latch the gate.

Some younger children, especially those who are coming to school for the first time, may cry the first few days at drop-off. The school staff is trained in the "**quick separation**" method, which works the best to calm your child and relieve your child's anxiety. Parents should quickly, firmly, and cheerfully say good-bye at drop-off. You may remind your child that you will be back, but you should leave quickly. Children who cry on arrival will stop crying shortly after your departure. Lingering or trying to convince your child to stop crying will only exacerbate the crying and anxiety. By maintaining a positive, cheerful attitude about the separation and about school in general, and immediately leaving, you will help your child acclimate to school. Parents who are worried about the state of their children are welcome to call the office and ask the office staff to check on the child. Remember that the staff has the best interest of your child in mind. If in the rare instance a child continues to cry and

display extreme anxiety, a teacher or office staff member will notify the parent.

School Day only Children will be dismissed at 3:00 pm and will be waiting in the carport. Please follow the same guideline as for drop off (i.e. remain in your car and wait your turn in line) Children not picked up by 3:15 will be checked into Extended Care and parents will be billed accordingly.

Students can only be picked up by their parents or an authorized person specified in writing by the parent in the child's file. If a parent needs someone other than the person specified on the pickup authorization form to pick up his or her child, prior written notification must be made. Élan Vital Montessori will not release your child to any person without written parent permission. The authorized person picking up your child must have picture identification, such as a driver's license or passport. Picture identification is requested by staff for the protection of your child.

If you need to pick your student up early, please contact the school office, during the office hours of 8:00 to 12:00, so we may notify the teacher of the early pick up and your child's day will be modified to allow for this change.

Any parent or authorized person who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol and arrives at school or child care to pick up a child will be asked to call someone else to accompany them home. 911 will be called if any parent or authorized person leaves school or childcare with a child while they appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

If your child is not picked up by 5:35 p.m., your child's emergency contact (listed on the child information update form) will be notified. If we can not reach a parent or emergency contact, child social services will be called. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for each minute the parent is late and \$2.00 for the second occurrence within 30 days.

Lateness

It is very important for your child to be at school by 8:30 am. It is critical for your child to arrive on time for the beginning of school. Repetitive tardiness is disruptive to the education process. Arriving on time is respectful to teachers, assistants, and to classmates since lessons begin at 8:30 a.m. We take our commitment to your child's education seri-

ously. Families who are repeatedly tardy will be contacted by the School Director to discuss the situation. Families continuing to arrive late to school may be asked to reconsider their commitment to Élan Vital Montessori.

Absences

We request a phone call or e-mail to the school office by 8:00 a.m. on any day your child will be late or absent from school or Extended Care. If a previously scheduled appointment means that your child will be late or must leave early, we request a phone call or e-mail with that information prior to the day of the schedule change.

Any absences occurring regularly jeopardizes social interaction with classmates and Montessori curriculum. Such occurrences on a regular basis may result in student dismissal from Élan Vital Montessori.

Inclement Weather And Power Outage Procedures

Tuition refunds or credits will not be made for school closure due to illness, vacations, weather related, or power outage closings.

Weather Related Closure

In the event of inclement weather, Élan Vital will follow the closures of East Baton Rouge Parish schools. Please contact the school at (225) 767-6620 for a closure message. Also, you may check the local ABC, CBS, and NBC affiliates for power outages, school delay, or closures. If school is delayed in opening, full day classes will begin 2 hours late at 10:15 am.

We will make every attempt to keep Extended Care open and available to our parents as a service whenever possible should weather or emergency conditions exist. Please be sure that we have your updated phone numbers on file. If your work number has a voice mail system, please provide an alternative phone number such as a main switchboard number or cell/pager number.

Power Outage

In the event of a power outage longer than two (2) hours, parents will be contacted via phone and asked to come pick up your children until the heat and/or power can be restored.

Classroom Observations

Parents are encouraged to make appointments to observe their child's class during the school year. First observations should be scheduled af-

ter the beginning of October to allow students to "normalize" and feel comfortable with observers in the classroom. January and April are also good months to observe, just prior to parent-teacher conferences. Of course, you are welcome to come at other times as well.

It is the parent's responsibility to coordinate with the office to schedule observations. Most observations are scheduled for mornings, preferably Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays. Every effort will be made to accommodate parental schedules. Most observers stay about 30 minutes.

When you arrive at the school for an observation, please check in at the office and you will be given some basic observation guidelines. All classroom observers sit in the room on chairs provided by the teacher. Observers should watch the students work, but refrain from active participation.

Do feel welcome to make an appointment with the classroom teacher to observe or participate in sharing any special talents you may have.

Attire

Please dress your child in simple, neat, comfortable clothing that the child can manage alone. Slacks and shorts with elastic waistbands, pull-over shirts and sweaters, and jackets with large zippers should be worn. While the staff will assist children who are having trouble, children should be able to manage their own clothing with little or no assistance. This is in keeping with our Independence learning objective: independence **is essential to the development of high self-esteem.**

Outdoor shoes should be sturdy and have rubber soles. Girls may wear shorts, slacks, or dresses (with bloomers) as long as the dress does not restrict movement in climbing and playing.

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather conditions. Remember that children do go outside everyday, unless heavy rain prevents outdoor recess. Please send solid shoes for outdoor play. Please ensure that shoes are easy for children to put on and remove themselves.

Remember that school is a place where we use paint, glue, and all sorts of other learning materials that may occasionally spill on your child's clothes.

On the first day of school, please send a **complete change of clothes** for your child. Label each item with the child's name. Send the clothing in a

clear plastic bag clearly marked with the child's name. This clothing will be stored at school and used in case of "accidents" at school. Please remember to immediately replace any soiled clothing that is sent home so that a change of clothes will always be available for your child.

Indoor Shoes

In order to provide a clean and orderly environment within the classroom, all children in the program are required to wear indoor shoes (crocs, etc.) while in the classroom environment. The indoor shoes must be provided on the day school begins and will be kept at school to be worn while in the classroom. **Hard soled indoor shoes are preferred in the event of fire drills and emergency evacuations.**

Student Supply List

Please ensure your child has the following supplies for their experience at school.

Backpack or Tote bag— pack your child's extra change of clothes with two changes of underwear in their bag. The school will provide a folder to be kept in each bag for parent/teacher communication and your child's work.

Insulated Lunch Box- a labeled lunch box with a cold pack is required to keep lunches cold. Please pack "healthy body" foods and avoid items with high sugar content. Items with high sugar content will be returned home unopened. Primary students should have foods in containers that they can easily open and feed themselves, cut into small pieces at home.

Appropriate Outdoor Covering- is required on the playground.

Indoor shoes— hard soled indoor shoes are preferred in the event of fire drills and emergency evacuations. Slippers should be clearly marked with the student's name and left at school.

Nap Supplies- (For Early Primary Students only) Will be provided by the school and laundered weekly.

Toys and Other Items from Home

Teachers may request "sharing items" for their classrooms. Sharing items are specifically requested by each teacher. Please label your child's sharing items.

Students are permitted to bring items from home to share with the class, if they have an educational value. We welcome books, tapes, and articles of scientific interest. **Toys are not permitted.** If you are uncertain about any item, please ask the teacher if it would contribute to the class program.

Please do not send valuables with your child unless special arrangements have been made between you and the classroom teacher. Élan Vital Montessori will not be held accountable for personal items that are lost or broken.

Lunch

Your child should eat breakfast prior to arriving at Élan Vital Montessori each morning. Parents are responsible for packing a lunch for their child in an appropriate container with a cloth napkin, reusable placemat, utensils, and a cold pack, (if necessary). Cold packs in lunches are required to keep food cold and safe.

Send servings in plastic containers rather than disposable items in order to support recycling efforts and to lessen our trash output. Use a thermos for soups, casseroles, etc. Please pack foods in containers that your child can open with little or no assistance. Spoons and forks are not provided. Each classroom has a microwave to warm up lunches, if needed, but please refrain from sending frozen meals.

Lunches are eaten as a class and positive manners are modeled and encouraged. Lunch is a quiet and social time when good manners and polite conversation are observed. Many children set out their own lunches and all are required to tidy up after eating.

Please send a balanced nutritional lunch for your child. Please pack "healthy body" foods. Suggestions include pasta, sandwiches, string cheese, cheese snacks, fruit, yogurt, vegetables w/ dip, fruit snacks, or roll ups. **DO NOT SEND CANDY, SODA, COOKIES, SUGARED CRACKERS, DESSERTS, OR FOODS WITH A HIGH SUGAR CONTENT.** Any foods with high sugar content will be returned, for enjoyment at home.

We do not allow students to share lunches with each other. Below are some ideas for healthy lunch choices:

- Fresh or dried fruit
- Vegetables raw or steamed
- Cheese slices or sticks
- Fruit juice
- Yogurt
- Raisins
- Rice cakes
- Granola bars or cereal bars
- Trail mix
- Sandwiches
- Leftovers from healthy dinners
- Crackers
- Fruit leather

Please label all lunch boxes, containers, and cold packs with your child's name. If you would like your child to drink something other than water you must send it daily in their lunchbox. We cannot refrigerate any beverages.

Snacks

Élan Vital Montessori has snack time each school day. Families of Primary Students will be assigned a week to provide snacks for the class. Elementary students should pack their own snacks along with their lunch. Please follow the “healthy body” guidelines outlined in the Lunch section of this handbook. Monthly snack lists are sent home with classroom newsletters.

Food Allergies and Restrictions

Food Allergies are becoming more widespread and their reactions can be quite serious and in some cases, life threatening. It is the parent's responsibility to notify Élan Vital Montessori in writing of any allergies or adverse reactions that your child may have with certain foods or beverages.

ages. You should note this on the Medical form, which will be made available to you at registration time. This form will be posted in the child's classroom and in the school office. A doctor's note must be provided to the school outlining procedures in the event of accidental contact, or ingestion, allergic reaction.

In the event that certain foods are restricted for other medical, religious, or personal reasons, please also indicate this on your child's medical form.

Birthdays

The **Celebration of Life** is our way to commemorate your child's birthday in the classroom. This celebration allows us all to enjoy some happy moments and memories with the birthday child. We strongly encourage parents to allow each child to have this happy experience. Summer birthdays will be celebrated in the month of May.

During the Celebration of Life, the birthday child walks around a symbolic circle representing the months of the year. As each circle is made, a statement is read giving the child's history for that year and a photograph from that year is shown. A few sentences about the history of the year are adequate. Mark your child's age on the back of the photographs. Parents prepare these statements and photographs. Each year the child is here, parents are asked to add to the history. All photographs and materials will be returned.

If you would like your child to have a small birthday celebration with his or her class, inform the teacher in writing about one week in advance. Teachers differ in how they fit birthday parties into class schedules, and what they permit in the way of snacks, so it is best if parents work out arrangements with their child's teacher.

Some children enjoy presenting a book or donating classroom materials in honor of their birthdays. Your child's teacher would be happy to make a recommendation if you would like to make a donation.

Special Activities and Field Trips

Special activities are occasionally planned throughout the school year. Parents will be given a minimum of two weeks prior notification with details outlining any planned special activity and cost, if applicable. Monthly classroom and school events are included in our monthly newsletters.

Parents will be given a minimum of two weeks prior notification of a classroom field trip. Written notification will be sent home disclosing destination, length of stay, mode of transportation, and cost if applicable. Field trip fees vary and the fee will be collected prior to the trip.

Written parental permission is required for all children leaving campus to attend field trips whether students are walking or traveling by car. All students attending the field trip by car must travel in an approved car seat, as required by Louisiana State Law, provided by the student's family on the day of the field trip. **Please label your child's car seat, as many families use similar or alike models.** Students requiring a car seat will not be able to attend without a car seat.

As our paramount responsibility is the safety of our students, we are unable to allow siblings or other children to attend field trips.

Animal Visits

Your pets can visit the school and your child's classroom, with prior approval of the teacher and School Director. If any child in the classroom has an allergy, no animals will be allowed to visit.

Communication

Phone Calls and Messages

Élan Vital Montessori acknowledges that clear, timely, and effective communication between parent, staff, and teachers is essential. Parents can call the school at any time to schedule a visit or come to the school during office hours any time there is a concern. Staff and teachers return calls as soon as possible. Be aware that teachers and assistants are responsible for children all of the school day and cannot easily get away to return your call immediately. They will, however, return your call at their earliest possible convenience. Parents should call the School Director at any time to address issues promptly when concerns exist. Concerns regarding Extended Care issues should also be directed to the School Director. We encourage you to communicate regularly with us, so we may work together to best meet the needs of the students.

As always, if your child must be absent from school and/or Extended Care, please notify the school office by voicemail, email or in writing. The school office will notify the teacher.

Office

The School Director is available to answer questions or concerns. We are a school community and value open communication between parents and the school to make our school the best it can be for our children. It is important to let the School Director know of any unresolved issues, which are of concern to you.

Newsletters

You will receive a monthly newsletter so that you are updated on classroom, school events, important school updates, and general information.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Conferences are held in October, February, and May. A conference sign up schedule will be available so parents can schedule a time that is mutually acceptable to confer. At the conferences, parents will receive a progress report our teachers have prepared specifically for conferences. The progress report provides a framework for conversation so that parents may get a clear picture of their child's social, emotional, and academic growth and development at our school. Conferences will be offered for all students three times yearly, in order to maintain a healthy learning relationship between the teacher, student, and family. If you have scheduling conflicts, please speak directly with your child's teacher so alternative arrangements may be made. At the end of the school year, teachers prepare a closing progress report for your child as well as supplying recommendations for summer activities to keep learning opportunities optimal.

School Governance

Élan Vital Montessori is an independent school, not affiliated with any religious or other outside interest. It is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. The members of the corporation are comprised of the parents of the students; hence, the school is known as a "parent-owned" corporation.

The two primary divisions of the corporation are:

- The Board, representing all parents, and
- The School Administration and Faculty.

Each of these divisions works cooperatively to govern the school under

the umbrella of AMS accreditation and in accordance with the regulations promulgated by the Louisiana Department of Education. In all decision-making, the welfare of the children is the first and foremost consideration.

The Board

A Board governs the corporation. The Board consists of 3 to 7 members who serve overlapping three-year terms. Members include four officers:

- President
- Vice-President
- Treasurer
- Secretary

Members are parents with active records of school community service and include a variety of professionals with specialized expertise to aide school governance. Members serve without remuneration.

Each year, the Board will appoint willing parents to replace retiring members.

The Board's primary functions are to oversee the welfare of the school and finances. In addition, the Board supervises the School Administration.

The Board, with the School Administration in attendance, meets at a minimum on a monthly basis. Typical agenda items include a Financial Report, President's Report, School Director's Report, and Director's Report covering topics such as short- and long-range planning, accreditation status, fund-raising, policy setting, etc.

All parents and faculty members are invited to attend Board meetings; your suggestions and ideas are welcome and we look forward to your participation. Board meetings are held regularly and will be announced in advance.

School Administration

The School Director handles daily school administration and finances. This includes managing school operations, parent contact, and financial administration.

The Director is responsible for setting policy, website maintenance, newsletters, event coordination, and long range planning.

The School Administration is interested in getting acquainted with each and every parent. Please stop by the office and introduce yourself.

Grievance Procedure For Parents

If any Faculty/Staff/Board Member is contacted by a Parent/Guardian regarding a grievance, the Faculty/Staff/Board Member shall provide such Parent/Guardian with the Grievance Procedure and shall direct such Parent/Guardian to the initial step which may be taken in an attempt to resolve such matter.

Any Faculty/Staff/Board Member contacted regarding such matter shall keep any and all information confidential and shall disclose such information only in response to an investigation conducted by the School Administration, Board, or a Grievance Committee appointed by the Board, or in response to a proper request made during legal proceedings regarding such matter.

If, and only if, the complainant's problem directly involves the School Administration, the complainant may skip steps 1-3 and may present his/her grievance in writing, directly to the President of the Board.

1. The complainant should schedule a first conference, as soon as possible, with the School Director. If a specific incident has given rise to the problem, this first conference should be scheduled as close to the date of the event as possible.
2. If this first conference with the School Director fails to resolve the problem, an official complaint should be submitted to the School Director, in writing using the Grievance Form (Appendix C) within fifteen (15) working days following the first conference. The grievance form requires the complainant to describe in detail the problem and steps that have been taken to resolve it. Upon receipt, the School Director shall date the grievance form and return a dated copy to the complainant.
3. The School Director shall begin an investigation into the problem. The School Director shall have ten (10) working days to complete the investigation. Upon completion of the investigation the School Director shall meet with the

complainant and inform him/her of the results of the investigation and what remedy the School Director thinks is appropriate. This meeting is the second conference. The School Director shall also provide an answer to the grievance in writing at or prior to the second conference. If the situation warrants, the School Director may choose to bring the problem to the attention of the Director or President of the Board at this time. If the complainant is not satisfied with the School Director's investigation or suggested remedy, he/she may appeal to the Director or President of the Board by submitting a written complaint, on the form provided in this Handbook, within ten (10) business days following the second conference. Upon receipt, the Director or President of the Board shall date the grievance form and return a dated copy to the complainant.

4. If a problem is brought to the Director or President of the Board, a Grievance Committee appointed by the Board shall conduct their own investigation into the complaint and shall respond in writing to the grievance within thirty (30) working days. The Grievance Committee shall consist of three members, including at least one member of the Board and one member of the teaching staff. Any decision made by the Grievance Committee shall be final and binding.

In order to preserve the integrity of this internal procedure, no faculty/staff member is to take any matter to a member of the Board or to any other person without first taking the appropriate steps laid out in the grievance procedure.

Any conferences between faculty/staff members and Board members, or other parents/guardians who are not directly involved concerning a grievance, which take place outside of the internal grievance procedure, are highly inappropriate and inconsistent with our goal of maintaining the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of employment information.

While we acknowledge parental responsibility and welcome positive involvement, Élan Vital Montessori School reserves the right to deny student admission or discontinue enrollment in the event that a parent

exhibits behavior that is discourteous, scandalous, rumor driven, disruptive, threatening, hostile, or divisive. In such a case, the decision of the Director and the Board regarding the suitability for continued enrollment or acceptance in the school will be final.

Parent Involvement

A parent-run school depends upon the support of the parents in order to function. Parental involvement is a necessity; without the time and resources provided by parents, Élan Vital Montessori would never have been founded and would not exist today. The children at Élan Vital Montessori benefit in immeasurable ways from seeing their parents take an active role in supporting their school. By their involvement, active parents underscore the importance of education and the value of each and every child.

All families of enrolled students are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of Family Service during each school year, but asked to contribute as many hours as their schedule permits. Please note: this is the minimum commitment required of *each* household.

The majority of AMS accredited Montessori schools have family service requirements. In fact, in order to maintain full accreditation status, our school must demonstrate at each accreditation juncture that our parents are actively working to support the school. There are several reasons for imposing a family service requirement, including:

- The children benefit both scholastically and emotionally when parents are active participants in their schooling.
- Family service is a tangible way for parents to actually live and practice the Montessori approach.
- Parents who serve are providing excellent role models for their children.
- Family service helps keep tuition at affordable levels; when parents trim the hedges, build shelves, clean classrooms, listen to children read, and assist teachers, the school saves a significant amount of money.
- Family service is fun! It provides a way for families to interact with other families, building a close knit community.

There are many ways to fulfill family service obligations. For example,

parents have painted, landscaped, made classroom materials, listened to children read, and assisted with recruiting. In addition, parents can support fund-raising activities.

At the start of the school year, a Family Service Commitment Form (Appendix B) is issued listing service opportunities. Parents are welcome to contact the School Administration to learn more about service opportunities.

The following activities DO NOT count towards fulfilling the parent service requirement:

- Attending parent-teacher conferences
- Attending Montessori educational seminars
- Attending classroom parties or school events

An individual Family Service Sheet is kept in the sign-in book in the school office. You are responsible for recording your service hours on the log sheet. You will be billed for any unfulfilled hours on your last statement for the school year. You may buy out your unfulfilled service commitment at \$25 per hour.

Please note: the school does not contact parents during the school year to make sure that all parent service obligations are completed. On your honor, seek out activities and ways to help, and track your own hours.

Health and Safety Policies

Positive Behavior Management

The Montessori principal of teaching and modeling respect for self, for others, and for the environment gives children opportunities to make appropriate choices in behavior. Routines in school and childcare encourage self-discipline in children and social skills are acquired and developed at Élan Vital Montessori.

Our trained staff will use a variety of developmentally appropriate behavior management techniques to direct/redirect your child in a positive, clear, and relaxed manner. These management techniques, called positive discipline, help children:

- Learn to make good choices.
- Learn problem-solving skills.
- Learn basic values of respect, trust, responsibility, honesty and caring for others.
- Learn to communicate their needs.
- Be encouraged in self-control.
- Be enabled in self-discipline.

Staff will manage inappropriate behavior with re-direction of alternative activities, and verbal conflict resolution while promoting and teaching Montessori values and techniques of positive discipline. Élan Vital Montessori strictly prohibits spanking or any form of corporal punishment, physical or mechanical restraint, the withholding of food or water, or any form of emotional abuse.

Staff are trained in positive discipline management techniques to achieve student success. Staff speak of desired behaviors directly to children. Repetition of requests are made calmly but firmly. "Please use walking feet so that you don't fall down" or "This is a one person work." "Let's find something else to do." Discipline is always age appropriate.

The words "time out" have evolved to mean different things to different people. Consequently, at Élan Vital Montessori, we do not use that terminology. We ask the child to sit quietly and think about rejoining the community. The child returns when they are "ready" to rejoin work/group or when invited back to the activities of the classroom or Extended Care by the teacher.

Parents of children who have difficulty within a Montessori environment will:

- meet with the teacher
- meet with the teacher and School Director,
- agree on a method of remediation as is necessary to resolve the social issues. The method of remediation may or may not be possible at Élan Vital Montessori. If the method of remediation is not possible at Élan Vital Montessori the child will be un-enrolled.

Biting Policy

Incidents of biting can be stressful for both the students and parents involved. It is important to understand that frequently biting occurs when a child is frustrated and is unable to express their needs adequately. A child may be biting as an attention getting device, to teethe or relieve teething discomfort, or for oral exploration. Commonly, biting is seen in children between 13 and 30 months of age. It is not a sign that the child, the parent, or the school has failed. However, it is an indicator that the child, parents, and school must work to provide the child alternative coping techniques.

There are clearly defined steps one can take to help your child learn how to stop biting. Élan Vital Montessori staff will work with the family to learn tools and new habits to alter the coping behavior.

- Repetitive incidents of biting will require a parent teacher conference. Teacher parent communication is key in this critical area of deep concern to Élan Vital Montessori. A change of schedule may be one of several interventions to interrupt biting actions before habits of coping are set. Élan Vital Montessori requires that if a child bites, and breaks the skin of another child, the biter must be seen immediately by the family doctor or the school must receive an indication in writing that the parents refuse medical attention. Élan Vital Montessori requires that a child who is bitten by another child, and whose skin is broken, is seen immediately by the family doctor or the school must receive an indication in writing that the parents refuse medical attention. Medical tests can be refused for family, medical, religious, or personal reasons through the right of privacy.
- Most bites do not break the skin. If the skin is not broken, an incident report will be filled out for the parent to sign stating the situation. The bite will be washed three times with soap and water, ice applied, and TLC given. If the skin is broken, the parent will be contacted by phone, and an incident report will be filled out for the parent to sign stating the situation. The bite will be washed three times with soap and water, ice applied, and TLC given.
- Staff report all bites to the School Director.

Ill Children

Please call the school office if your child will not be attending school due to illness. If your child should become ill during the school/ Extended Care day, you will be notified immediately and will be expected to pick up your child within an hour. If you cannot pick up your child, choose and authorize a designate so that your child does not further expose other children and staff to illness. In such event, your child will be given a place to rest away from the other children in the school office until you arrive. Parents are responsible for finding alternative care in case of the child's illness. Children who are contagious must stay at home. School parents and the Health Department, will receive a notice of communicable diseases that are present at the school when applicable. Communicable diseases present at the school are posted on our parent board for your information and a notice is sent home to parents.

If your child displays any of the following symptoms, please keep them at home:

- **Fever:** Temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or higher and sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability or confusion within the last 24 hours.
- **Diarrhea:** Three or more watery stools in a 24-hour period, especially if child acts or looks ill.
- **Vomiting:** Vomiting on two or more occasions within the past 24 hours.
- **Rash:** Body rash not associated with diapering, heat or allergic reactions, especially with fever or itching.
- **Eyes:** Thick mucus or pus draining from the eye, or pink eye.
- **Any symptom of the usual childhood diseases:** e.g., scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox, and whooping cough.
- **Appearance/Behavior:** Unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, difficult to wake, confused, excessive crying or irritable for 4 or more hours.
- **Sore Throat:** Especially if associated with fever or swollen glands in the neck.
- **Common cold.** Regarding chronic allergies: If your child is

under the care of a physician, a written statement from the doctor must be presented specifically stating the nature of the child's condition and that the condition is not contagious. Guidelines regarding the care of the child should be provided from the physician.

- **Any skin infection** - boils, ringworm, impetigo.
- **Lice:** Children who have lice may not return to school/ childcare until they are louse and nit (egg) free.

If your child develops any of these symptoms while at school or Extended Care, you will be notified and asked to make immediate arrangements to pick up your child within one hour. Children are welcome to return to school when they are able to participate in all regularly scheduled activities of their class.

Students who are unable to participate in recess or who need "extra" rest should stay at home until they are fully recovered from their illness.

Medical Appointments

Parents should try to schedule visits to the doctor and dentist so that they do not conflict with school hours. If this is not possible, inform the school in advance so that the staff can be prepared if your child must arrive late or leave early.

Injury Prevention

We are proud to provide a closed and secure campus with safety as a paramount concern for the school, the parents, and children we serve. Our outdoor and indoor play areas comply with safety requirements. Classrooms are designed to comply with regulations for schools and childcare centers. Hazards are monitored daily and every consideration and effort is made to maintain a campus that is free of hazards for our children and parents.

Indoor and outdoor play times are carefully scheduled and supervised by the classroom teachers and assistants during the school day. Staff follow school safety practices to ensure safe play occurs for all the children on campus.

Hand Washing Practices

Hand washing sinks are provided with easy access to comfortably warm

water, soap, and towels. Adults and children are encouraged to wash hands frequently throughout each day, after toilet use, blowing a nose, as well as before and after snacks and meals. Children are taught how and why they must frequently wash their hands. Art and outside activities are times when additional hand washing is needed. Élan Vital Montessori staff are aware of this important health practice and monitor the situation helping the child according to what is developmentally appropriate and timely for the smooth operation of each classroom and the school.

Sunscreen

Sunscreen is required for all children. All parents must fill out a medication consent form to have sunscreen applied to their children. Teachers will keep the sunscreen in a labeled box on the playground or in their classrooms. Please apply the base coat of sunscreen at home prior to sending your child to school.

Medical Emergencies

All Élan Vital Montessori staff are trained in First Aid and CPR for both adults and children, as well as in HIV and Child Abuse. Minor cuts, bruises, and scrapes will be treated with soap, water, and a bandage and parents will be notified upon their arrival at school for pickup.

Documentation of injury, treatment, and parental notification will be made on an Incident Report Form. Parents will receive a copy of the Incident Report Form and will be asked to sign it. The original will be kept at the school in the child's file and a copy will be given to the parent.

In case of a serious injury or emergency, staff will call 911 and may administer appropriate first aid.

Staff will notify the parents immediately of any head injury, nose bleed, or other serious injury and treatment given. If staff members are unable to reach a parent, they will call the second emergency contact number listed on the Child Information Update Form. If a student injury results in medical treatment or hospitalization, Élan Vital Montessori is required to immediately call and submit an "Incident Report" form to the Department of Social and Health Services Licensor.

Medication Management at School

Medication can be either internal or external. All medications (including

sunscreen) shall be administered only with the written approval of a parent or guardian. A Doctor's prescription and a Medication Consent Form must be completed in full detail. Prescription medications shall be administered only as directed on the Doctor's prescription and Medication Consent Form. Medications must be in the original container and have the medication information sheet from your pharmacist. The container must have the child's full name, name of medication, dosage, time to be administered, route of administration, and date of expiration. A detailed record will be kept by the school office of any medication administered by staff.

Parental and Physician consent is required for non-prescriptions drugs also, such as: anti-histamines, non-aspirin pain relievers and fever reducers, cough medicine, decongestants, anti-itching creams, and sunscreen.

Child Abuse Reporting

Louisiana State Law requires that School staff immediately report to the Office of Community Services in good faith and in accordance with Louisiana Children's Code, Article 610 D any instance where there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or exploitation.

Appendix A— Family Service Commitment

Volunteer service time is a source of providing necessary support and services. Your involvement gives you connection with the community that is guiding and nurturing your child. You gain the opportunity of getting to know your child's friends, their families, and the staff.

Élan Vital Montessori is a parent/board run school, therefore, each family is asked to volunteer **20 hours** a year to help in some capacity of school operations. We need volunteers in the following areas:

- Substitute Assistant Teacher
- Help with Special Classroom Projects
- Help Make Classroom Materials
- Special Event Planning
- Photography
- Carpentry
- Sewing
- Grounds Maintenance and gardening
- Painting
- Computer/Technology /Website
- Facility Maintenance
- Fundraising
- Recruiting

And much more!!!

*If you purchase items for the school, every \$25 spent equals 1 hour of volunteer time. Purchases must be pre-approved.

An individual Family Volunteer Sheet is kept in the sign-in book in the office. You are responsible for recording your volunteer hours on the log sheet. You will be billed for any unfulfilled hours on your last statement for the school year. You may buy out your unfulfilled volunteer commitment at \$25 per hour.

In order to coordinate participation, each family is required to complete a Family Service Sheet as part of the registration process. On this sheet, parents may indicate their areas of interest and skill and choose the ways in which they are willing to participate in the life of the organization.

FAMILY SERVICE COMMITMENT 2010/2011

Please circle the Family Service Opportunities that you are interested in, sign and return to school office.

Parent (s) Names:

Student (s) Names:

Phone Number:

Family Service Opportunities (Circle all that apply)	Available Times
Administration Support Website Maintenance/Technology Newsletter List other applicable skill:	Please describe your availability
Fundraising	
Buildings & Grounds Maintenance Landscaping Parent work days	
Teacher Assistant Substitute Class Visitor (e.g., share trip experiences) Lesson Assistance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to children read • Checking spelling and/or vocabulary • Make classroom materials • Sew Other (please describe):	

<p>Special Event Planning: Provide refreshments, logistical support, etc. for the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Houses • Thanksgiving Feast • Winter Feast • Mardi Gras Parade • Mothers Day Tea • End of School Candlelight Ceremony • Other (please describe): 	<p>Please describe your availability</p>
<p>Recruiting</p>	
<p>Photography</p>	
<p>Other (please describe in specific terms areas of expertise that you might have; for example: accounting, artistic talents, fundraising, legal work, etc.):</p>	
<p>Please Sign and Date:</p>	

Appendix B—Parent Grievance Form

ÉLAN VITAL PARENT GRIEVANCE FORM

Name:

Date:

Please explain your complaint with specific details:

**I discussed this matter with the School Director on the following date:
(Date of first conference)**

I disagree with the School Director's response because:

I think the proper solution should be:

Received by School Director

Date:

Copy:

Response of the School Director to the complaint after investigation:

Date:

**A second conference was held with the School Director to discuss the investigation of the complaint on
(Date of second conference)**

I disagree with the School Director's response because:

Received by President of the Board

Date:

Copy:

Response of the Board:

Representative of Board:

Date:

