

Dear Families,

Welcome to Athena Montessori Academy!

We are honored to have you join our community. Thank you for entrusting us with your most precious gifts---your children. As a parent, I know what a leap of faith it takes to leave your young children in the care of others. All of us take our roles very seriously, and we understand the importance of our responsibility to you.

We are a learning institution where a growth mindset is essential. We seek to learn and grow and work in accordance with our Mission Statement. We pay attention to the individual needs of each child, and we view the children as our compass and guide for our policies, procedures, and decisions.

"It takes a village. . . ," and we will work hard to earn your trust. In return, we invite you to partner with us towards our goal of understanding and serving your children and family to the best of our ability. We hope you feel a part of our special community for years to come.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a smaller "isl" following.

Lisl Friday, Founder

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MISSION STATEMENT

Athena Montessori Academy exists to build a healthy and courageous place to grow, play, and actualize an equitable community.

We are committed to the education of the whole child, to preparing the child for life, to building strong community, and to making a positive social impact. Athena is an innovative Montessori school serving the academic, physical, social, and emotional needs and development of children ages 18 months to six years and their families. While honoring Dr. Maria Montessori's core philosophy and curriculum, we also strive to adhere to current theories of education and developmental psychology, brain research, physical education, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practice in order to best serve our children and community. We are also committed to providing environments free of environmental toxins for our children and raising awareness about the importance of clean living for growing minds and bodies. Athena Montessori Academy is a Full School Member of the American Montessori Society.

HANDBOOK GUIDELINES

The guidelines included in this handbook have been developed as a result of our commitment to serving the whole child and have continued to evolve after more than a decade of service to our children and families. We will continue to honor and uphold Dr. Montessori's method, approach and beliefs about children; we have also learned how essential it is to continue learning about how we can best serve our children and families beyond Montessori. One of our priorities is to stay current with relevant research on hot topics, such as how the brain develops, nutrition, the threat of environmental toxins, DEI practices, and children's exposure to technology and media. We continue to learn about how these various factors affect children's experience, behavior, as well as their emotional and cognitive development. More significantly, we believe it is our responsibility as professional educators committed to serving the whole child to raise awareness around these topics and to provide opportunities for staff and parents to have open and respectful dialogue about these topics.

Ultimately, it is our commitment, as Montessorians, always to "follow the child," and we recognize that all children and families are unique and that what might serve one family might not serve another. In this handbook we will lay out and enforce specific policies in regards to caring for your children. The guidelines outlined in this handbook are simply recommendations and suggestions, based on our collective experiences of what we believe is in the best interest of the children and classrooms. Requirements around these guidelines will only be made if they are not adhered to, *and* a situation arises in which a child or group of children's academic development, behavior, or social or emotional development is being negatively affected in any programs in which they are enrolled. In this event, your child's guides and, if necessary, the

Directors, will be in conversation with you about making a plan that will best serve your child and the classroom community.

OUR STAFF

The Athena staff consists of an Owner/Founder; a School Director; Education Director; Registrar; Office Manager; trained and certified Montessori Lead Guides in every class who hold MACTE approved Montessori credentials; and experienced and trained assistants, support staff, and substitutes. We encourage you to review photos, backgrounds, and qualifications of our staff members on the Staff page of our website.

All staff members (including substitutes and extracurricular partners) must pass criminal background history checks and FBI fingerprints as required by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHS) and hold current CPR and First Aid certification. Additionally, staff members are required to complete a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education each year, including training in awareness, prevention, and action steps in the area of suspected child abuse and neglect.

HOLIDAYS & SCHOOL CLOSURES

In designing our calendar each year, we look at several neighboring school districts, including Austin ISD, Eanes ISD, and other local private schools and attempt to meet the needs of both our parent and staff community to the best of our ability. Our school year traditionally runs from mid-late August to late May or early June, and we offer an optional summer camp program in June and July for current students and alumni through third grade. We are closed for Labor Day, Thanksgiving Week, Winter Break, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Spring Break, Memorial Day, and Independence Day. In addition, at least four days are scheduled during the school year for parent conferences, and additional days are scheduled for staff professional development. School is closed for one week prior to summer camp and for four weeks following summer camp so we can make repairs and improvements, complete deep cleans of our learning environments, and allow ample time for staff training and preparation.

We recommend you to plan ahead for childcare for days when school is closed. We encourage our extracurricular partners to provide camp options for days when school is closed and keep you informed of those options in advance via our monthly newsletters, the Parent Resource page of our website, and our Facebook page.

Occasionally, severe weather causes unexpected school closures or delays. We typically follow AISD guidelines for decisions related to school delays and closures due to weather, however, we do not provide make-up days in the case of school closures.

Athena reserves the right to alter its calendar in order to meet the needs of the school. The school calendar is always available on the Calendar page of our website and in hard copy in the front office.

EMERGENCY BROADCAST SYSTEM

When urgent or emergency messages, such as those regarding school closures or delayed starts, need to be conveyed to the entire community, we will send the information via a mass text message and an email. For non-emergency messages, Athena may only use one of the communication options.

We will conduct a test of the system in August, the week before school starts, and in June, prior to the start of Summer Camp, and we will notify you via email when the text has been sent. If you do not receive the text, please call the office immediately so that we can double-check that we have your correct contact information on file.

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Enrollment occurs annually from December through March for the following school year. Families are welcome to submit an Application for Admission at any time during the year to be placed in our Waiting Pool. Applications only need to be submitted once with a one-time, non-refundable application fee and family photo, and we request that families keep us updated as to their current contact information and pertinent information about the child to assist us with the admissions process.

As space becomes available in our programs, we prioritize enrollment in the following order:

1. Currently enrolled students.
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students once they are of eligible age and who have an Application for Admission on file in our office.
3. Applicants in the Waiting Pool, who are considered according to space availability, age, developmental readiness, gender, temperament, ethnicity, and, date of application.

Children with specialized needs, siblings or otherwise, are furthermore considered according to the ability of our staff to meet those needs and our need to maintain a balance of children with specialized needs in each of our classrooms.

TUITION & FEES POLICIES

Tuition and Fees amounts are listed on our Tuition and Fees document which can be found on the Admissions page of our website. It is understood that your child is being enrolled for the entire academic year covered by the contract signed upon enrollment. All tuition amounts and program fees are annual amounts that can be paid in one lump sum due July 1st; semi-annually due July 1st and December 1st; or in ten equal installments due on the 1st of each month beginning July 1st with the final payment due on April 1st. Tuition is considered late after the 5th of each month, and late payments will incur a late fee. Tuition includes holidays, staff development days, and any months when there is not instruction for the full month. Rates are subject to annual increases.

Athena Montessori Academy has partnered with Smart Tuition to ensure easy online payments, receipt tracking for your records, and year-end tax statements. During the enrollment process for new families, we will provide information about how to create your Smart Tuition account to manage your payments. **All families are required to have an account with Smart Tuition and there is an annual fee for this service.** You will have a choice as to whether you pay your tuition online or via check to our office. If you choose to pay online, you will receive instructions as to how to make payments online and access your receipts. If you choose to pay by personal check, we have a lockbox on campus that we check daily at the front office.

Past due payments over 30 days will affect your enrollment status. If necessary, we will utilize fee collection measures or legal action for uncollected fees and/or unpaid tuition. For any questions about your account or balance, please call our office or send an email to our Registrar at office@athenamontessoriacademy.com.

Withdrawal Policy:

The Enrollment Contract term is for the full school year. If a reason arises for you to break your contract and withdraw your child prior to the end of your contract term, you are required to provide written notice to the School Director, and a penalty fee will be incurred, per the following conditions:

- Written notice provided at least 30 days in advance of the child's last day at Athena will incur a penalty fee of 10%, or one monthly installment, of the annual tuition.
- Failure to provide notice, or written notice provided less than 30 days in advance of the child's last day, will incur a penalty fee of 20%, or two monthly installments, of the annual tuition.

If you withdraw your child after March 1st, you will be held responsible for the tuition for the remainder of the school year.

Please reach out to the Registrar at office@AthenaMontessoriAcademy.com if you have any questions pertaining to the Withdrawal Policy.

Proration and Reimbursement:

Proration or reimbursement will be considered in the event of a child starting school late (any time after the first day of school), or in the case of a child withdrawing early from a program (before the end of the contract term) and in which tuition has been pre-paid. To calculate a prorated tuition or reimbursement amount, we divide the total annual tuition by the 44 weeks in the school calendar, which includes the two weeks of prep prior to the first day of school and the workweek following the last day of school. Attendance anywhere between one and five days within a given week is considered as a full week for the purpose of proration or reimbursement.

Mid-year Enrollment:

Families beginning after the start of the school year are responsible for the pro-rated balance of the annual tuition, including all relevant fees, and a minimum of 10% of the tuition balance due by the child's first day of school. All tuition and fees for mid-year enrollments occur within the given month of attendance. If a family begins after the start of the school year, and chooses to pay on the monthly plan, the final tuition installment payment will be due on May 1, rather than April 1, of that school year.

Force Majeure:

The School's duties and obligations laid out in your enrollment contract shall be suspended immediately without notice during all periods that Athena Montessori Academy is closed because of force majeure events including, but not limited to, any fire, natural disaster, hurricane, war, governmental action, act of terrorism, epidemic, pandemic, strike, civil unrest, or any other event beyond Athena's control. If such an event occurs, the School's duties and obligations in your enrollment contract will be postponed until such time as Athena, in the sole direction of the administration, may safely reopen. In the event that the School cannot reopen due to an event under this clause, the School is under no obligation to refund any portion of the tuition paid.

CLASSROOM PLACEMENT

Decisions about classroom placement for your children are given serious consideration. In an effort to provide the best learning experience possible for your child, we take several steps to ensure that we are finding the best fit for each child and each class community. We will take your insights into consideration regarding desired classroom placement for your child, **however, placement in a specific classroom cannot be guaranteed.** Placement of children with specialized needs, including children who currently receive some form of therapy, will also be taken into consideration during the placement process to ensure goodness-of-fit for each child and to ensure a balance of children with specialized needs in each of our classrooms. After a thorough process, including input from our Lead Guides, our Education Director will make final decisions regarding placement for each child, and we are always willing to share our reasons for the decision with you.

Tots Placement

Children entering our Tots Program from the Waiting Pool are initially placed into one of our Tots classrooms (serving children ages 18 months to three years old) based on age and gender as well as any significant notes relayed to us from the parent during the admissions process or observations made by our team. These notes may include, but are not limited to, details about the child's temperament, development, ethnicity, and unique learning needs. Please see notes regarding special considerations above.

Primary Placement

Children currently in our Tots Program typically transition into our Primary Program at the start of the school year, although we do, on occasion, transition children mid-year based on the child's developmental readiness and availability in the Primary Program. Classroom placement decisions are made after a series of observations and conversations between the Tots and Primary Lead Guides and based on our need to balance age, gender, ethnicity, and temperament in each classroom. Your guide will share details regarding this process with you throughout the school year, and share their recommendations as well as the reasons for their recommendations with you before final placement decisions are made.

Children entering our Primary Program from the Waiting Pool are initially placed based on our need to balance age and gender in each classroom. Final placement decisions are made after observations of the children during annual enrollment events held for new Primary children, and are also based on notes gathered from the parents or noted by our administrative team during the admissions process. These notes may include, but are not limited to, details about the child's temperament, development, ethnicity, and unique learning needs. Please see notes regarding special considerations above.

Siblings and Twins

Our general policy is to place siblings in separate classrooms in an effort to provide them with a unique learning experience and to foster their independence. However, we will make placement decisions for twins on a case-by-case basis and will take into consideration the family's input and desires. If we agree to place twins in the same classroom, whether in the Tots or Primary Program, we will continue to assess whether both children are being served by this decision on an ongoing basis. If we perceive any challenges for both or either of the children, and feel that they would be better served in separate environments, we will address our questions with you immediately and reserve the right to transition children to different classrooms as deemed necessary.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

We offer both a Half Day Program and a School Day Program for our children. The Half Day Program ends after lunchtime and before nap or the second work period, and children are picked up at either 12:15 p.m. (Tots) or 12:30 p.m. (Primary). The School Day Program includes either a naptime or second work period, and children are picked up between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m. For details on your child's specific pick-up times and locations, please consult your classroom roster emailed at the beginning of the school year, Athena's monthly school calendar, or speak with your child's guide.

To ensure smooth transitions for all children, we ask that you notify us in advance when considering a move from the Half Day Program to the School Day Program. After the school year starts, we will transition children from the Half Day Program to the School Day Program only with the approval of your child's Lead Guide and at the beginning of a month.

DAILY OPERATION

Athena Montessori Academy is open Monday through Friday as follows:

Office Hours	7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Early Arrival Program	7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Tots Montessori Half Day (18 mo-3 years) (Includes lunchtime)	8:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Tots Montessori School Day (18 mo-3 years) (Includes lunchtime and a nap or rest time)	8:30 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.
Primary Montessori Half Day (3-6 years) (Includes lunchtime)	8:15/8:30 a.m.* – 12:30 p.m.
Primary Montessori School Day (3-6 years) (The School Day program in Primary includes lunchtime and either a nap or a second work period.)	8:15/8:30 a.m.* – 2:30/2:45 p.m.*
<i>*Drop-off and pick-up times occur on a staggered basis and vary depending on class, to provide ample room for parking for all families. You will be informed of your drop-off and pick-up times before school starts. Hours may vary during summer camp.</i>	
After School Program (Athena students only)	2:45 – 5:30 p.m.

Tots Program

The Tots Program is a uniquely designed program created to meet the needs of the young child between the ages of 18 months and three years old. Children enrolled in the Tots program typically stay in the program for one full school year; some stay a year and a half or two years, depending on age and development. With a sensitivity to and understanding of the unique needs of this age group, the Tots program has been designed to provide a warm and nurturing environment that supports the child's initial transition from home to school and to encourage the child's natural inclination toward independence. More details can be found on the Programs page of our website.

Primary Program

The Primary Program is designed to be a three-year program, and once assigned to a classroom, the child stays in the same classroom for the full three-year cycle. Montessori Primary programs embrace some fundamental guidelines: attention to the sensitive periods of a child's development; a prepared environment; guidance in the academic areas of Practical Life (which includes care of self, care of the environment, care of others including plants and animals), Sensorial, Geography, Science and Nature, Language, and Math; and a mixed-age grouping. We embrace the concept of the "whole child." Students are immersed in an atmosphere that enhances their physical and social-emotional as well as their academic needs. Senses of independence, curiosity, empathy, and confidence are fostered both in the classroom and the outdoor work and play environments. More details can be found on the Programs page of our website.

Nap

Tots

All Tots students attending the full School Day nap in their classrooms after lunch. Please bring a labeled bedroll for your child's naptime. You may also bring a blanket, pillow, and something for your child to snuggle with for comfort. We ask that you take your child's nap belongings home each Friday to wash them and return them on Monday morning. Resources for bedrolls, wet/dry bags, and labels can be found on our Parent Resource page.

Primary

Primary students attending the full School Day are divided in the afternoons by developmental readiness into either our Primary Nap Program in the gym or a second work period with their guides in the classroom. You will have an opportunity to give your guides information about your child's sleep patterns in your Student Survey and during your pre-visit. If your Primary child is still napping or benefitting from a rest period, he or she will be placed in the Nap Program. (We start the three-year-olds and most new four-year-olds in Nap and assess readiness for a second work period after the first three weeks of school.) During nap, the children gather in a designated space with soft music, white noise, and a sweet rest time with our Nap team and some of our Assistant Guides. Please bring a labeled bedroll for your child's naptime. You may also bring a blanket, pillow, and something for your child to snuggle with for comfort. These items will be kept in your child's nap cubby in the gym.

We ask that you take your child's nap belongings home every other Friday to wash and return on Monday morning. Resources for bedrolls, wet/dry bags, and labels can be found on our Parent Resource page.

Second Work Period—Primary Students

Once Primary children grow out of their nap they participate in a second work period, which starts with a quiet story time from a chapter book to support reading comprehension. Following story time, the children are placed with peers of similar academic, social, and emotional development for the remainder of the work period.

The younger children traditionally work with creative projects, which includes art, stories, practical life activities, outdoor work, on-campus field trips, and gardening.

The older children, typically the five- and six-year-olds, and any younger children that are ready for more academic lessons, work with the Lead Guide in a more academic environment, the Montessori Extended Day, where the children continue to work on lessons in reading, writing, math, science and geography, in preparation for elementary school. Children in their third or capstone year may also receive our proprietary Kindergarten Curriculum in preparation for first grade, and also participate in a weekly Science Club with the Kindergarten students from other classes. We design an individualized curriculum for each child depending on their age and developmental readiness, as well as input from parents as to educational plans beyond Athena.

Your child's guide will be in conversation with you as to their recommendations about how we can best help prepare your child for their next step depending on which school your child will be attending following Athena. Our Education Director, Mandy Waid is always available as a resource as well.

Early Arrival Program and After School Program

In addition to our Half Day and full School Day Montessori Programs, we provide quality care for your children before and after school in our Early Arrival Program (EAP) and After School Program (ASP). Our primary goal is to care for your children in a nurturing, creative, playful, and flexible environment while honoring Montessori philosophy, before and after regular school hours. We begin accepting children at 7:30 a.m. in our Early Arrival Program and provide a calm, engaging morning for students before the regular school day begins. The guides deliver the EAP children to their respective classrooms at 8:25 a.m. You may indicate your preference for enrollment in the either of these programs on your Enrollment Contract.

Enrollment in EAP & ASP is offered on a **first-come, first-served basis** (to children who are at least 24 months old). Your selection of the EAP and/or ASP on your Enrollment Contract indicates your desire for your child to participate in the specified program (s) for the duration of the school year. If, for any reason, you choose not to continue in the EAP & ASP, please notify the office as soon as possible. If your family does not need the extended care hours, please

notify the office as soon as possible. Families are waitlisted for ASP and available spaces will be filled quickly. You must re-enroll annually to maintain your spot in the programs.

Rates for the EAP & ASP are based on **full-time enrollment/five days per week**, (and for the After School Program, include a healthy snack each afternoon.) See the Tuition and Fees document available on the Admissions page of our website for further details.

Important: Enrollment in the After School Program is contingent upon our assessment of a child's developmental readiness and needs. If your child's Lead Guide or the Directors have a question or concern about whether EAP or ASP is able to serve or continue to serve your child's needs, the Directors will schedule a meeting with you to address the concern. Ultimately, if the Directors feel that the EAP or ASP is unable to meet the needs of the child, or if the objectives established for the child are not met, we reserve the right to withdraw the child from the program. In these cases, any pre-paid tuition for the EAP and ASP will be refunded in full.

If your child is enrolled in the EAP or ASP, you will be required to read and sign a separate handbook outlining our policies, expectations, and details about our programs.

Extracurricular Programs

For students of Athena Montessori Academy we offer supplemental programs, before and after school, such as yoga, soccer, dance, martial arts, and Spanish, that take place in our gym, classrooms, and out on the lawns. These extracurricular partners and classes are subject to change, as are the fees charged. We have chosen top-notch programs and instructors to serve as an extension of our program offerings at Athena. Although Athena oversees all extracurricular programs, the owner of each program conducts their program independently. Athena requires background checks on each teacher or coach, provides training, and ensures that every instructor is current in CPR and First Aid. Enrollment and payment for extracurricular programs is handled directly through each partner. If you don't do so online, you can turn in paperwork or checks at our lockbox by the school office door or with an administrator inside our office and we will make sure the partner receives them. Visit the Extracurricular section of the Programs page on our website for information about these programs.

For families who have a child who has recently enrolled or who will be transitioning from the Tots to the Primary program, we strongly recommend that you refrain from enrolling your child in any extracurricular programs until your child has had ample time to acclimate to his or her new environment. Please speak with your child's Lead Guide if you have questions regarding the best timing of your child's enrollment in extracurricular programs or with questions regarding which programs may be best suited for your child.

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

All programs are scheduled for five days a week. Regular attendance is of the utmost importance for the individual child and the classroom communities. Absenteeism, although sometimes inevitable, is expected to occur only for valid reasons, such as illness or family emergency, and will have no bearing on tuition and fees. If your child is excessively absent, the Directors may schedule a meeting with you to discuss attendance and determine next steps for your child to have a successful experience at Athena.

If you know your child is going to be absent on a scheduled school day, for any reason, please inform your guide in advance. If you need to keep your child at home on a scheduled school day but do not learn of it until that morning, please call the office and let us know the reason for the absence, particularly if your child is sick, and we will relay the message to your child's guides. Please do not email guides the same day your child is absent as they may not see that message. Please call the office with all same day notices of illness and/or absence. If your child is not in attendance at Athena by 9:30AM, you will receive a courtesy Health Check phone call from the office.

Children who miss a day of school may not participate in the After School Program on the day of their absence.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP EXPECTATIONS

Drop-off and pick-up times are staggered by class to provide ample parking opportunities for all families. Drop-off and pick-up schedules are always posted in the top right corner of the monthly school calendar, which is included in our monthly newsletter and posted monthly on the Calendar page of our website.

By way of reminder, we ask ALL families to use the two Athena parking lots off the Ben White access road (1400 W. Ben White Blvd.) for drop-off and pick-up, *unless you have a student in the yellow house*. We also ask that you observe your scheduled window of time for both drop-off and pick-up. If you have a question about your scheduled time slot, please refer to your welcome packet or the top portion of our monthly school calendar. Because we have more families and staff than parking spaces, it is imperative that we maximize efficiency around parking. Thank you.

Yellow House families, please be mindful not to block neighbor's driveways or mailboxes, and follow safety protocols for street parking for the safety of our children. Regardless of where you park, you must walk your child to your classroom's designated drop-off area and drop your child off directly with your child's guide(s). Your child's guide will explain your drop-off and pick-up times and procedures before your child's first day of school.

Please note that drop-off and pick-up times are not good times to have lengthy conversations with the guides. Because they are responsible for being able to see and hear all the children in their care, they will likely talk to you without making eye contact with you. We ask guides to

stand shoulder-to-shoulder when speaking with other adults so as to be able to keep their eyes on the children. You are welcome to request a phone or in-person meeting with your guides at any time during their regularly scheduled office hours.

Drop-off

We ask that all parents please adhere to their classroom's specific drop-off window and be off campus no later than 9:15 a.m. Creating a peaceful environment for your children can be made difficult by late arrivals and unexpected changes to the children's schedules. If it is not a pattern and is an unavoidable circumstance, you can drop off your child late for school but we ask that Tots children be dropped off no later than 10:30 a.m. and Primary children be dropped off no later than 11:00 a.m. **After those times, Athena classrooms will be closed to late arrivals. Parents arriving later than the noted windows will be directed to the school office.** We understand that sometimes medical appointments are scheduled in the mornings. For this reason, we kindly request that you attempt to schedule any necessary appointments as early as possible to minimize disruption to the child's routine and to prevent late arrivals. Where possible, we recommend that appointments be scheduled in the afternoons and that a plan is made with the Lead Guide for an early pick up instead of a late arrival. Please notify and make a plan with your Lead Guide a minimum of 24 hours in advance if your child has a scheduled doctor's appointment and you need to drop them off later than 9:15 a.m. The Lead Guide of your child's class will outline the specific protocols for these exceptional cases for your child's classroom. This policy is in place because it can be challenging for children this age to acclimate into their day when they arrive after the first morning work period has begun. We appreciate your cooperation with this policy. Please see our "Illness Policy" section for details about our drop-off protocols as it relates to a child returning from a 24-hour illness exclusion period.

Please also note that if you arrive prior to your scheduled drop-off window in the morning and leave your child in our care, you will be charged a \$35 Early Arrival fee.

Pick-up

Your designated pick-up window is always included at the top of our school monthly calendars sent from the office on the first of each month with our school newsletter. Please plan to arrive early enough to park and pick up your child within your designated pick-up window. If you arrive later than your classroom's specific designated pick-up time for a Program Day schedule, which does not include After School Program care, you will be charged a late fee of \$35. If you arrive later than 5:30 p.m. to pick up your child from the After School Program, you will be charged a late fee of \$35 plus \$1 per minute starting at 5:30 p.m. An invoice for fees incurred will be added to your parent account online accordingly. For the safety of the children remaining in our After School Program, we ask that families leave with their child(ren) promptly upon picking them up from school.

We know that sometimes it can be hard to get the children to leave all the fun at the end of the day and some families can use that opportunity to connect and spend some time on campus. We

support that! For that reason, we have left open access to the Pirate Ship playground area but we do keep the slide playground, the Tots playground, and any other outside environment, closed to limit the use of materials and space that have already been settled for the day by our guides. If your child is showing interest in playing in any of those areas, please redirect him to the Pirate Ship playground. While visiting the Pirate Ship playground we ask that you adhere to the following guidelines:

- Do not leave children unaccompanied or in the care of a staff member after you've picked them up.
- Refrain from visiting any areas being used by the After School Program.
- Pack out what you bring in (remove all trash).
- Use only the outdoor bathrooms (located at the south end of the blue buildings).
- Be sure you can see and hear your children at *all* times.
- No cell phone use.
- Follow the rules of the playgrounds and all outdoor work environments.
- Do not disturb the classrooms or guides during their office hours.
- Refrain from sharing snacks or drinks with other children and keep our peanut-free and dessert-free policies in mind while on Athena grounds.

Athena reserves the right to adjust or end access to the playground areas after pick up.

SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT POLICIES

HHS Licensing requires that each child be signed in and signed out each day. The staff member in charge at drop-off or pick-up will be responsible for signing in and signing out your child. It is the responsibility of the person picking up or dropping off the child to connect with the guide to make sure the child gets signed in or signed out. Because these times of the day can be very busy, it is imperative that you make direct contact with the guide so that your child's arrival or departure can be accounted for.

AUTHORIZATION TO PICK UP A CHILD

The only people authorized to pick up a child from Athena Montessori Academy are the child's parents or guardians. If you want to designate another person to pick up your child, you must list that person on your child's Authorized Pick-up List. You can update your authorizations at any time by clicking on the Parent Login link located in the top right corner of our website. You will be asked to enter your username and password each time you access your account.

Anytime you add someone to your list, you are required to provide the person's first and last name, phone number, and his or her relationship to the child (e.g., grandmother, friend of the family, etc.). This person must bring a valid driver's license or state-issued photo ID showing

their full name the first time they pick up your child. We are required to record the DL number for our records.

If a change of plans, on any given day, does not allow you or a designated person to pick up your child and you need to send someone who is not yet on your list, you must notify the office prior to pick-up time.

In case of emergencies or illness, parents and guardians will be notified immediately to come pick up their child. If we are unable to reach a parent or guardian, we will contact those listed as emergency contacts. You may also come pick up your child in the event of unforeseen circumstances, family matters, or weather emergencies. We appreciate a call ahead of time, so we can make a plan and prepare your child for an early departure.

TOILETING

Tots

Children in the Tots program will be introduced to the toilet from day one. Though children are encouraged toward independence in this area, they are never forced or coerced to use the toilet. Children still in diapers will be changed regularly and introduced to the process of using the toilet, including hand washing. A separate personal cubby will be provided for children still in diapers to store diapers and wipes, which we ask you to provide. Should you have more specific questions regarding this process, please don't hesitate to discuss this matter with your child's guide.

Primary

Students must be independent with toileting and no longer wearing diapers (during the day) by June 1st of the preceding school year to enter the Primary program (or three months prior to their first day of school).

Please note that your child's start date will be deferred if your child is not completely potty-trained by the above date (even if your child is already enrolled in the program). We are happy to provide guidance and support in this area prior to your child's start, and will be assessing children for readiness closer to your child's first day of school. If we determine that your child is not demonstrating readiness, we will be in conversation with you to determine an alternate start date. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's readiness for Primary in this or any other area at anytime during the enrollment process, please call the office right away to speak with our Education Director.

While the guides expect a certain level of mastery in toileting in the Primary Program and aim to support the child's continued independence with toileting, guides will assess the needs of younger children or children still in the early stages of toileting and provide support as needed and as they are able during the toileting process. Because the occasional "accident" is still expected to happen, please provide 2 changes of clothes and reusable wet/dry bag for your child's cubby and label all belongings. If your child's guide has concerns or questions about

your child related to toileting, please trust they will speak to you in a timely manner. Similarly, we encourage you to speak directly with your child's guides to relay any specific concerns or questions you may have related to the toileting process.

CLOTHING

Please send your child(ren) to school in clothing that will help foster independence. Remember that we aim to encourage independence in self-care, so anything that may limit or impede your child's independence is discouraged. Please avoid buckles, difficult snaps, or "onesies" that may restrict their movement or cause a distraction.

Your child(ren) could also be engaged in MESSY, hands-on activities, so we suggest that you dress your child for WORK. Learning to drink from an open cup, playing with water, digging in the dirt, gardening, playing with rain water, and painting are just a few examples of these types of activities. We also request that you send an extra set of clothing in case we need to assist your child in a change of clothes. Though each child will have a personal space for items, we ask that you **label all of your child's clothing and belongings**. Soiled clothing will be sent home daily in a wet/dry bag provided by parents; please replace the following day with an extra change of clothes.

Regarding shoes, flip-flops, shoes without a secure back, and hard-soled boots are not safe for the playground and they are not ideal for freedom of movement. Keep in mind when selecting footwear that it should not interfere in children's exploration of puddles, mud, etc. Closed-toe shoes are ideal.

Clothing choices depicting weapons of any kind, fictional or real, are not allowed at anytime. We also request that you be mindful of any clothing choices that reference media-related or branded characters, particularly those of a more mature nature. While there are no further restrictions on what your child can wear to school, we do want to acknowledge that some media-related characters on clothing (and other items) can pose challenges within the dynamics of a classroom community. Please be mindful that some children have not yet been exposed to media, and, some characters/images can be confusing and scary to the young child (Primary classes may include children as young as two and half years old). Please trust that if we perceive any clothing choices as problematic, your child's guide will speak directly with you.

ITEMS TO LEAVE AT HOME

We kindly request that children leave toys, purses, money, candy, gum, cosmetics, and any blankets or pillows that will not fit into their cubbies at home. Should your child bring any of the above items to school, they will be stored until the end of the day. Toys resembling guns or weapons will be sent back home immediately. The same rule applies to any clothing items, lunch boxes, or other items that depict weapons of any kind.

LOST OR DAMAGED ITEMS

Montessori teaches independence and care of one's own belongings. We are not responsible for any lost or damaged personal items. We have Lost and Found boxes in each classroom and in the main office. Labeling items helps in the recovery of lost items, and we make a reasonable effort to return a lost item to its owner. Unlabeled items left for long periods of time will be donated to Goodwill.

FOOD & NUTRITION

General Information

Athena Montessori Academy has been issued a Permit to Operate a Food Enterprise by the Health and Human Services Department. Our staff members are required to maintain current Food Handler's Training Certificates, and we have a licensed Food Manager on staff to oversee food preparation in our commercial-grade kitchens.

Food Policies

Due to the severe nature of peanut allergies, and the inherent risks to our student body, we enforce a peanut-free policy. **Please do not send peanuts or any food containing peanuts with your child to school.** If your child's guide finds an item with peanuts in your child's lunchbox, they will send the item back home with a reminder about our peanut-free policy.

Also, please note that we have a **"no dessert"** policy at Athena Montessori Academy referring to foods high in refined sugars, such as desserts including cakes, cookies and candy. Sweets are a good thing for you to enjoy with your child at home, and will be sent back home if found in your child's lunchbox.

We also have a **low-sugar guideline**, and we encourage you to study the list of ingredients in packaged products keeping in mind that foods listing sugar among the top three ingredients may be questionable. Guides may choose to send an item home if sugar is listed in the first three ingredients of that item *and* if they perceive that the food item be affecting your child's behavioral and/or emotional development in the classroom, or success with resting or concentrating. Please discuss any questionable food items with your child's guide.

Lunch

All children eat lunch with their classmates and guides, and the guides utilize the opportunity to model appropriate table manners and etiquette in addition to discussing good nutrition and health practices.

You may choose to pack and send a lunch with your child to school or, if available, choose to enroll in our Lunch Program. Each year we evaluate options for providing the option of an organic, healthy lunch for an additional fee. Details about our Lunch Program will be provided to you prior to the start of the school year, and we will keep you posted about any changes in lunch offerings as needed throughout the school year.

Snacks

We ask parents/guardians to volunteer to provide snack and fresh flowers on a sign-up and optional basis over the course school year. Self-serve snack is made available in the mornings during work period, and flowers are used by the children for flower arranging in the classroom. You will have the opportunity to sign up for specific weeks at the beginning of each semester, and the sign-up sheet will be made available by your child's guide showing the dates that you are responsible for providing the children's snack. The week prior to your assigned week, your child's guide will send you a shopping list with requested items. Please bring the snack items and flowers with you on Monday morning or as otherwise requested by your child's guide.

When purchasing snack items, we ask that you not only follow the guidelines given you by the guides, but also keep our **peanut-free policy, no-dessert policy, and low-sugar guidelines** in mind and provide snacks that are fresh and nutritious (see section on Nutrition below). Please see the list below for foods that are not recommended for consumption in group care by the Childcare Licensing division of Health and Human Services. HHS cites that "research has shown that 90% of fatal choking occurs in children younger than four years of age." It is a requirement and best practice for all children in group care to abstain from eating potential choking hazards in school.

Examples of foods that present a risk of choking include:

- hot dogs sliced into rounds
- whole grapes
- hard candy
- string cheese
- nuts
- seeds
- large pieces of uncooked raw vegetables (e.g.; raw peas, carrots, broccoli)
- dried fruit
- pretzels (including pretzel thins)
- potato chips
- popcorn
- marshmallows

- spoonfuls of peanut butter
- chunks of meat larger than can be swallowed whole

If, after reviewing our guidelines and policies below, you have further questions regarding snacks or allergy restrictions, please don't hesitate to discuss this matter with your child's guide. We greatly appreciate your willingness to volunteer and donate snacks and flowers! *Please note that Athena Montessori Academy is not responsible for the nutritional value of parent-provided food or for meeting the children's daily food needs.*

In addition to a morning snack, children enrolled in our After School Program will have a nutritious snack provided and paid for by Athena. We buy organic produce wherever possible especially when buying foods from the EWG's "dirty dozen" list.

Nutrition Guidelines

In keeping with Athena Montessori Academy's mission to cultivate and nurture healthy young bodies, parents and guardians are asked to send their children to school every day with a nutritious lunch that will not spoil without refrigeration. At least one ice pack is recommended by health experts to be included in lunch boxes to keep food fresh. We also recommend food thermoses for hot food.

In light of recent research regarding the harmful effects of chemicals and pesticides in food on growing minds and bodies, we also encourage you to consider sending organic, whole foods when possible, foods free of high fructose corn syrup, added hormones, and antibiotics. To learn more about healthy food choices for children, please visit the Environmental Working Group website, the Parent Resource page of our website, and our Clean Living section.

To help preserve our environment, we also request that you please attempt to send your child's lunch in reusable containers rather than throwaway containers such as paper or plastic bags. Insulated lunchboxes and bags with ice packs work well to keep lunches fresh. Please be sure to label your child's lunchbox or bag. Resources for BPA-free reusable food containers, lunch boxes, and water bottles can also be found on the Parent Resource page of our website.

Food Allergies

If your child has an allergy that has been diagnosed, we are required by Childcare Licensing to have an individualized action plan on file, which we call a Physician's Allergy Action plan. A signed Physician's Allergy Action Plan is required for all students that have a listed allergy that requires medication or medical attention. **Children with an allergy that requires an immediate dosage of epinephrine or any other lifesaving medication will not be allowed into care without a signed Physician's Allergy Action Plan and all the medication listed on the plan available to the school.** This plan includes a list of what your child is allergic to, possible symptoms, and steps for caregivers to take if the child has an allergic reaction. You

may use the Physician Allergy Action Plan form provided to you by Athena or obtain a signed plan from your health-care professional. If your emergency plan includes administering epinephrine, antihistamines, or any other medication, we must also have an Authorization for Dispensing Medication form for each medication on file. Authorization forms must be updated every year starting from the initial authorization date.

The signed Physician's Allergy Action Plan has a photo of each child with details about their individual allergies that will be posted in every classroom and the gym. Athena staff members will be provided with training on how to identify and treat potential allergic reactions. It is our shared responsibility to ensure a healthy environment for every child. When filling out your enrollment forms online annually, please update us in writing on your child's Health Information form of any food allergies or sensitivities that your child has and provide for us all the information we need to create the Action Plan. Ongoing, please always keep us current with any changes in your child's health, allergies, or dietary restrictions by notifying our office in writing and providing Athena with an updated signed Physician's Allergy Action Plan form.

Note: If your child is enrolled in ASP, Athena may require parents to bring in a second set of medication to be kept in the gym so that lifesaving medication is in both places the child will most likely frequent.

HEALTH & ILLNESS

Health Guidelines

In consideration of recent scientific research highlighting the negative impact environmental toxins have on the development of the young child, we have spent a significant amount of time reflecting on the ways in which we can limit our children's exposure to environmental toxins and provide the cleanest learning environments possible. The nap room floor is a non-toxic Marmoleum surface. We have added an Austin Healthmate Air purifier and a reverse-osmosis, filtered water system to every room on campus providing cleaner air and water for our children.

In addition to providing clean air and water, we are committed to keeping up with current research regarding environmental toxins in our children's environments and carefully weigh our options when selecting materials and products used regularly by our children. We encourage you to do likewise when shopping for items that will be used by your child on a regular basis. These items include, but are not limited to, bug sprays, sunscreens, bedrolls, water bottles and food containers. In addition, we also use plant-based paper and toxin free cleaning products, including Branch Basics, in all of our environments wherever possible.

We encourage you to check out our collection of articles in our Clean Living section accessible on the Parent Resource page or speak with our Founder to learn more about how you can limit your child's exposure to environmental toxins.

Water Bottles

We ask that you bring a water bottle for use by your child at school. If your child is enrolled in the After School Program, you will be asked to bring a second water bottle for use in After School as well. Based on our experience, we have found that metal water bottles are much easier to keep clean in addition to the fact that they are healthier for the children. For this reason, we request that every child bring a Klean Kanteen or something similar for use at school with a screw on cap. Water bottles will be kept at school and cleaned weekly. Please visit the Parent Resource page of our website for resources.

Illness Policy

Athena Montessori Academy follows HHS recommendations and Texas Health Department Requirements in case of illness. A child may not attend Athena Montessori Academy or may be sent home if any of the following conditions are met:

- Any illness or condition that prevents the child from participating comfortably in childcare center activities, including outdoor play;
- Any illness or condition that results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children;
- If the child has one or more of the following:
 - **Fever:** Ear temperature of 100.1 or higher in the past 24 hours.
 - **Diarrhea:** Two or more times within 24 hours (watery BM's that look different and are more frequent than usual).
 - **Vomiting:** One or more episodes within 24 hours (more than usual "spitting up").
 - **Eye Infection:** Redness or swelling of the eye and/or lids, and/or secretion of yellowish discharge and crusting.
 - **Bronchitis:** Or any other upper respiratory or chest infection which usually begins with hoarseness, cough, and a slight elevation in temperature. The cough may be dry and appear painful for the child.
 - **Rash:** Any skin irritation we cannot identify.
 - **Impetigo or Hand Foot Mouth Disease:** Red or white pimples which become small vesicles surrounded by a reddened area. When blisters break, the surface is raw and weeping. Look for signs in neck creases, groin, underarms, face, hands, feet, or diaper line.
 - **Head Lice:** Live contagious insects or their nits (egg sacs) that infest hair. Children will not be readmitted without being free of live lice and nits.
 - **Unknown illness:** Any condition without obvious symptoms other than unusual paleness, irritability, tiredness, or lack of interest.
 - **Contagious Disease or Condition:** Any contagious condition including but not limited to: Measles, Chicken Pox, Mumps, Roseola, Strep Throat infection, Head Lice, etc....

Children may be brought to Athena if they have a mild cold or allergy, an allergic rash, diaper

rash, prickly heat, a loose bowel movement, dietary or medication diarrhea, **as long as they can cope successfully with the program and do not require care that results in a greater need than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children.** Parents, please alert staff to anything out of the ordinary that your child is experiencing. If for whatever reason, diagnosed or undiagnosed, your child is unable to cope with a program and is showing signs of illness, lethargy, cannot stay awake outside of rest time, is inconsolable or does not feel well enough to participate in the everyday activities of the classroom, you will be called to pick them up so that they can see a doctor and/or get better at home.

A child's exclusion and readmission to the program is subject to review by their receiving classroom guides and/or a Director. By helping us to observe good health standards, you will be protecting your child and the others at Athena.

IF YOUR CHILD BECOMES ILL AT SCHOOL

The following are the steps taken by the school: 1) The child is kept comfortable and when possible, settled in a location where new individuals are not exposed; and 2) Parents are immediately called.

Children who are sick must be taken home **within one hour of being contacted**, as we do not have facilities to care for sick children. If neither parent can be reached, other persons listed on your emergency contact and authorized pick up form will be called. ***It is very important that all telephone numbers and information be kept current, in case we need to call you.***

School Policy: Specific Symptoms & Readmission Criteria

The school's policy with regard to specific symptoms and readmission criteria is as follows:

- **Fever:** If the child has a temperature of 100.1 degrees or higher the child is prevented from attending school. The temperature is taken with an ear thermometer. The child may return to school when they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- **Diarrhea:** Parents will be notified when the first episode of watery bowel movement occurs. Parents will be informed that if a second watery movement occurs during the school day, parents must pick up the child. Parents will be asked to pick up a child immediately if abdominal pain, fever or vomiting accompanies the first or second occurrence of diarrhea. To be certain that the diarrhea does not re-occur; children are to be excluded from the program for 24 hours from the time the second episode of diarrhea occurs.
- **Vomiting:** If one or more episodes of vomiting occur within the previous 24 hours, the child shall be excluded from the program. If vomiting occurs during the school day, parents will be called and asked to pick up child immediately. Gagging due to excessive crying or eating too much or too quickly does not constitute vomiting or require exclusion from care. The child may return to school when they complete 24 hours without vomiting.
- **Eye/Nose Drainage or Infection:** If thick mucus or pus is draining from the eye or nose, a child is prevented from attending school. Green or yellow mucus may indicate

an infection or allergy. If the doctor indicates that the mucus is due to an allergy and is not contagious, a note from the doctor must be brought to school in order for the child to be readmitted into care. If the child requires medication, they may return to school 24 hours after the first dosage of medication has been dispensed.

- **Respiratory Symptoms:** If child exhibits difficult or rapid, shallow breathing or severe coughing, the child is prevented from attending school. If the child makes high pitched croup or whooping sound after he/she coughs, and the child is unable to lie comfortably due to continuous cough, the child is prevented from attending school.
- **Skin Rashes:** If the child has undiagnosed skin rashes or sores, the child is prevented from attending school. If the child has persistent itching of skin or scalp, the child is prevented from attending school until treated by a physician. A child with open wounds may return to school ONLY IF the wounds are adequately covered and the bandages are not susceptible to being removed by the child or compromised through normal wear and tear at school and IF the child's pediatrician provides a note stating the child is well enough to return to school.
- **Active Lice:** If your child has active lice or nits, the child will be prevented from attending school.
- **Appearance or Behavior Changes:** If the child looks or acts differently, is unusually tired, pale, lacking appetite, confused, irritable, unable to stay awake outside of rest time, or difficult to awaken, the child should remain at home for further observation. If the child is not able to participate in the daily activities and routine of school, they should remain at home. The child may return to school on the following school day if the observed symptoms have all completely subsided.

Note: Athena reserves the right to exercise its exclusion policy if it is in the best interest of the group even if there is a physician's note stating that the child can return to care.

Out of concern for the health of all of our children and staff members, Athena Montessori Academy unconditionally reserves the right to notify you should any of the above symptoms occur and asks that you pick up your child as soon as possible. We ask that parents and guardians appreciate our sensitivity to children who exhibit symptoms of illness.

If your child's illness requires a 24-hour exclusion, parents are still required to comply with our Drop Off Policy.

If a child has or is suspected of having a communicable condition, not only will we notify the parents and guardians immediately, but we will also report it to the HHS and the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS), if listed as a Notifiable Condition by TDSHS. The child will be excluded from attendance until the readmission criteria for that condition (listed in the Texas Administrative Code) is met.

Lice & Nit Policy

In addition to the above, any child found with live lice or nits in their hair will be sent home immediately for treatment, and may not return to school until they are lice and nit-free. In these cases, all parents with children in potentially affected communities will be notified via

email within 48 hours, and all children in those communities will undergo mandatory head checks at school to prevent further spread until all children are deemed lice-free. Finally, all bedding and clothes will be sent home for washing.

Medication Policy

Athena Montessori Academy staff does not administer medication to children. In rare events, and on a case-by-case basis, the Director may administer medication as needed but **ONLY** with a completed Authorization for Dispensing Medication Form, including a parent's signature. Authorization forms can be picked up in the office.

The only exception to the above policy will be in the event of a severe allergy or asthma attack or a dangerously high fever. Under these circumstances, the staff of Athena Montessori Academy will administer the following type of medication:

1. An inhaler for severe asthma
2. An EpiPen for severe allergy
3. A dose of oral antihistamine
4. A fever reducer

In the event of administration of the above-mentioned medication, parents will be notified immediately. We furthermore require completion of an Authorization for Dispensing Medication form signed and dated by a parent upon recognition of symptoms and administration of the medication, a record of which will be kept in the child's file. Authorization for Dispensing Medication forms must be updated in writing every year starting from the initial authorization date.

Daily Health Checks

Upon a child's arrival, guides conduct a basic health check. Health checks include looking for new bumps, bruises, or scrapes; listening for congestion and cough; and observing the child's general demeanor. If something is out of character for the child, the guide will share his or her observation with the parent/guardian and the other guides that interact with that child during the day. The guide may send the child back home with the parent/guardian if the health check indicates that the child is not well enough to attend school.

Immunizations and Health Records

We are required by HHS to keep a copy of each enrolled child's immunization records on file and a health statement from your child's doctor signed and dated within the last year. You can review the Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule via the Department of Health and Human Services – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.immunizetexas.com>.

We are also required by HHS to keep a copy of each enrolled child's annual hearing and vision results for children four years old or older on September 1st.

At the time of enrollment you will be asked to provide documentation of immunizations with a doctor's signature, or, if you choose not to immunize your child on the recommended schedule, you must provide the State of Texas Immunization Waiver Form (notarized). At this time, tuberculosis testing is not required in this region. You are welcome to have your pediatrician or family doctor fax (512) 693-0065 or email the Registrar at office@athenamontessoriacademy.com for faster processing times. Please feel free to call or have the doctor's office call (512) 494-6237 and ask for the Registrar should questions arise.

Students without complete health records are not allowed to attend school by law, and start dates will be deferred for any child with an incomplete file.

Therapy at School

Please note that if your child is currently seeing a therapist for any reason, we are unable to guarantee that therapy sessions can or will take place in the classroom. We will always do our best to accommodate your child's needs while also keeping the needs of the classroom in mind. These decisions will be made each time a child enters a new learning environment. This group includes children transitioning from the TOTs Program to the Primary Program.

Child Abuse or Neglect

Texas State Law requires the staff of Athena Montessori Academy to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or a law enforcement agency.

Staff members are required to complete annual training in awareness, prevention, and action steps in the area of suspected child abuse and neglect. For more information about warning signs, prevention, awareness, community organizations, and resources for your family, please visit: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>.

The toll-free phone number to file confidential reports is (800) 252-5400. Failure to report is a Class B criminal offense, punishable by a \$2,000 fine and/or imprisonment for up to 180 days. Failure to report could also be subject to considerable monetary liability in a civil rights action.

Campus Mosquito and Pest Control

It is required by Licensing that our campus be treated every month by a professional pest control service. We have chosen Chem-free, a child-friendly and eco-conscious licensed exterminator, and pesticides will sometimes be applied indoors and outdoors. Information on the types and times of application is available upon request. We also treat our outdoor environments with MosquitoNix, a mosquito repellent mist that is sprayed before school and after school in all of the outdoor areas. We also utilize large fans to deter mosquitos in the outdoor areas.

SAFETY

Emergency Preparedness Plan

Athena Montessori Academy places a high priority on safety. We currently have three family entrances to campus, all of which have keypads, which require a four-digit code that is shared with staff and parents alone and is changed regularly. There are two other access gates only to be used by staff or emergency personnel, each of which has a different code not provided to families. Emergency personnel have access to all keys and codes to campus to assist in the event of an emergency.

The school maintains current records on all annual health, fire, and gas inspections, and emergency evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. We also conduct monthly fire drills and periodic severe weather drills with the children. At least four times a year, we practice both a sheltering drill for severe weather and a lockdown drill for a volatile or endangering person on the premises or in the area. All staff have access to a phone app which has geolocation capabilities. The app will has a direct line to all emergency and medical services.

In the unlikely event of an emergency, our staff members have access to emergency contact information and phones at all times in order to communicate with parents, designated emergency contacts, and emergency personnel. In the event of a school-wide emergency or evacuation, the staff will follow our evacuation, relocation, and sheltering/lockdown procedures as needed and will continue to care for the children until each child is released to their parent or someone from their Authorized Pick-up List. If this situation were to arise, we will notify you immediately via our emergency broadcast system described in this handbook. Your responsibility as parents and guardians is to keep Athena Montessori Academy current on your emergency contact information.

Our location for evacuation in the event of a fire is:

Our parking lot at 1400 W. Ben White Blvd.

If Athena is required to evacuate the school grounds, our temporary shelter is:

Service King, 1300 W. Ben White, Austin TX 78704

For more details regarding our plan for emergencies, please contact the office.

First Aid

First aid supplies are kept in all classrooms, in the gym, and on the playgrounds at the school, and staff members on every shift are trained in Infant-Child CPR and Emergency First Aid. If a minor accident occurs, the staff will provide basic first aid for your child. In these cases, the attending staff member will fill out an Accident Report, and parents and guardians will receive a copy of the report.

If there is a more serious event or more extensive treatment is required, the School Director, or a qualified appointee, will make all decisions about the care of the child and fill out an Incident Report. In these cases, as applicable, parents and guardians will be notified immediately to come pick up their child. We will also call an ambulance or the paramedics if the need arises.

If your child requires professional medical attention, you will be asked to sign the Incident Report and a copy of the report will be filed with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. If your child requires medical attention after hours due to an event that occurred at school, we request that you notify us as soon as possible so we can file the report in a timely manner.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE

Athena Montessori Academy is devoted to nurturing the spirit of each child. We will never physically discipline your child, and we will never speak to your child in a harsh or negative manner. We follow Maria Montessori's guidelines for behavior modification. Dr. Montessori never equated goodness with silence and immobility. Self-discipline, she felt, should be acquired gradually through absorption in meaningful work. Behaviorist studies have shown conclusively that children desire to learn and do not need to be motivated by reward and punishment. If a child displays inappropriate behavior in the classroom, the guide will help him or her to select work that more fully absorbs the child's attention. If a child displays inappropriate or unsafe behavior on the playground or in any other environment, the guide will redirect the behavior to an activity that is more productive, and use the opportunity to teach problem-solving, conflict-resolution, emotional-expression, and mediation skills.

If a child should develop chronic behavioral problems that cannot be resolved using the techniques set forth in our Discipline and Guidance Policy, if we are not meeting the child's needs, or if a child's placement is deemed detrimental to the other children in the program, we will require a Parent Conference during which the child's Lead Guide and a Director will

communicate any concerns with the parent and share a plan for moving forward in meeting the child's needs and the needs of the community.

Our process for further conflict-resolution steps are categorized as REQUEST, REFER, REQUIRE. Athena will request a parent conference, which may include an action plan with a referral for additional or outside resources. If these measures do not meet the needs of the situation, additional Parent Conferences, third-party professional observation and/or guidance, testing or assessment, or temporary removal from school may be required. In this situation, parents will be provided with a copy of our plan for supporting the child's progress, as well as a proposed timeline for addressing the concern. A record of the child's progress will be kept by the child's Lead Guide and admin, and parents will be informed of any significant developments in a timely manner during this process. Our Education Director, Mandy Waid, will act both as a supportive presence and a resource for guides and families during this process.

Ultimately, if the child's Lead Guide and the Directors feel that our program is unable to meet the needs of the child, or if the objectives established for the child are not met, we reserve the right to withdraw the child from the program. In these cases, any pre-paid tuition is eligible for a pro-rated reimbursement.

We are required to share the following legal information regarding discipline:

Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapter L, Discipline and Guidance:

- Discipline must be:
 - (1) Individualized and consistent for each child;
 - (2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
 - (3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

- A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:
 - (1) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
 - (2) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
 - (3) Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
 - (4) Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- (1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- (2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- (3) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- (4) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- (5) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- (6) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;

- (7) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- (8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
- (9) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Communication Guidelines

Each year Athena staff receives training in effective and healthy communication and we are deeply committed to creating and maintaining a culture of respect for both the children and the adults in our community. In addition to our commitment to being a gossip-free community, our commitment to healthy communication includes staying current about feelings with others, refraining from making assumptions, only speaking directly with necessary parties, and always approaching conversations with respect and a commitment to problem-solving.

While it is inevitable that conflicts of need will arise within the community, we utilize a Trust Tree and a Framework of Communication that fosters open dialogue and healthy resolution amongst our staff. Ultimately, it is our intention to serve as role models for our children, and our hope is that you will join us in this commitment, so that, together, we can best serve the children in our care.

If you have a concern related to your child, we encourage you to speak directly with your child's Lead guide, and/or our Education Director, keeping in mind that guides' decisions are always guided by what they perceive to be in the best interest of your child, as well as the other children, in the learning environment. Similarly, if you have concerns or issues related to administrative decisions or school-wide policies, we encourage you to speak directly with our Directors.

Direct and respectful communication in person is most constructive and is especially important when addressing sensitive issues or strong feelings. We kindly request that you save using email communication for logistical and scheduling purposes only. Please also refrain from sending text messages to staff member's personal cell phones or from relaying messages of a sensitive nature during drop-off and pick-up windows. Our guides maintain regular office hours and are happy to set up a time with you to address any issues in a private and undisturbed environment. Similarly, our Directors would be happy to set up a time to meet with you to hear your concerns with an intention of problem solving and resolution.

Classroom Communications

Guides post group lesson plans and activities on white boards outside their classrooms, and they keep files and notes on every child's individual lessons and progress. You are always welcome to check in with your guide's if you want to know about your child's work on a given day. Guides have daily office hours before and after school.

Classroom guides also maintain digital communication accounts such as Instagram or personal blogs for sharing photographs and to send regular emails, newsletters, and/or links with information about what is happening in your child's classroom, important reminders, and upcoming classroom or school-wide events.

Parent Observation Policy

Please note that we do not schedule any observations within the first six weeks of school. After that time, if you are interested in observing your child's classroom, please contact your child's guide or our Education Director to discuss best timing and make a plan. We particularly encourage parents to observe prior to Parent Conferences to prompt questions and provide a context for a better understanding of your child's environment. If you are interested in observing another classroom on campus, please contact the office directly to schedule your observation.

On the day of your observation, please check in at the office, where a member of the office staff will sign you in, provide you with an observer badge, and give you a copy of our guidelines for observing in the classroom. You will then be escorted to the classroom and shown where to sit. Please observe quietly without interacting with the children so as not to disturb the lessons and classroom flow.

Separated or Divorced Families

We understand that communication challenges may arise within your family, particularly with families who are divorced and/or going through a separation. Should you be in this situation, our commitment to you is that we stay current with both parents and/or guardians and deliver consistent messages to both. When possible, we ask that both parents/guardians be present for Parent Conferences unless the Lead Guide(s) determines that it is in the best interest in light of communication styles to schedule separate conferences. We also ask that you keep us current as to drop-off and pick-up and visitation schedules for each parent, and any other travel or arrangements that may affect your child, so we can support the children with these additional transitions. For enrollment purposes, Athena can only accept one set of official forms and documents for the child. We will send both parents enrollment packets and information online, but can only accept back one set of forms. It is the responsibility of the separated or divorced family to decide if the forms will be filled out jointly or by one parent before they are submitted to the school.

Parent Conferences

Your family will have at least two scheduled Parent Conferences each academic school year—one in the fall and one in the spring. There is no school for children on these days, but we do provide childcare on campus during your Parent Conference at no charge. We schedule as many conferences as is feasible on these days when school is closed, and we will try our best to accommodate your schedule. Additional conferences, as needed, will be scheduled during the guide's office hours in the afternoons to accommodate every family. These biannual conferences are designed for discussions regarding your child's social and emotional development and goals as well as academic progress at Athena Montessori Academy. You will gain insight into your child's Montessori experience, and we will learn more from you about your child. As your child prepares to graduate from Athena, your guide can also provide you with insights about your child's learning style and assist you in thinking through potential options for elementary school.

Special Concerns and/or Questions

Your child's guide may request additional conferences with you if they perceive a special need and/or have a particular concern related to your child's ability to succeed in the learning environment. Our guides are trained to observe and nurture the development of the whole child and are committed to communicating with you in a timely manner if they have questions about anything that may hamper your child's ability to learn. Categories may include issues with speech and/or hearing, motor skills, sensory integration, behavior and/or emotional development. If we need more information regarding your child's unique learning needs, we will follow a process of inquiry that may include a request to have your child assessed by an outside resource, such as a speech or occupational therapist, a child psychologist or neuropsychologist. In these cases, the parent will be provided with a written report outlining the guide's observations and plan for moving forward. Ultimately, it is our commitment to you to stay current with you about our observations, and our goal is to work with you in partnership to ensure we are continually providing the highest quality learning experience for your child. Please speak with your child's Lead Guide or our Education Director if you have any questions related to this process at any time.

Similarly, we are always available to meet with a parent or guardian who has a concern he or she would like to address. If you would like to schedule any additional conference(s) with your child's guide or the Directors at any time during the school year, please call in advance to make an appointment during office hours. Please do not try to have an impromptu conference with your child's guide when you are dropping off or picking up your child. During drop-off and pick-up times the guides are responsible for all of the children and cannot be distracted by a lengthy conversation with a parent.

Your child's guide and/or the Directors will also make themselves available for a telephone conference if scheduling a face-to-face meeting is difficult to fit into your schedule. Every effort will be made to resolve concerns that a parent or guardian might have with Athena Montessori

Academy's policies. We appreciate your cooperation regarding scheduling additional conferences.

PARENT EDUCATION

Each year we aim to provide workshop offerings on timely and relevant topics presented both by field experts as well as our own staff for our parent community. We invite you to not only attend workshops but also to participate in smaller discussion forums as together we work to stay current on research that informs best practices and best ways to serve our children. Our Directors host periodic Coffee & Conversation events in the office to dig into special topics. We welcome your suggestions and feedback around topics that are important or of interest to you.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

We aim to build a close-knit community of children, staff members, and families, and encourage parent involvement wherever possible. We host various events throughout the school year which may include, but are not limited to, festivals, field trips, educational workshops, community and fundraising events, and volunteer work days. The purpose of these events will be to educate, share information, showcase the children's work, discuss topics of interest in the community, and share our varied interests. We welcome suggestions from our parent community.

Your participation in volunteer opportunities or fundraising events is invited and very much appreciated, but not required. We understand that budgets and time are precious, and that nights and weekends are special to share quality time with your family and friends.

If you are interested in volunteering your time or if you have an area of expertise you feel would be of interest or benefit to the children, please speak directly with your child's guide. If you are interested in sharing your expertise with the adult community by presenting a workshop for staff and/or parents, please contact a member of our administrative team. Read more below about how you can volunteer for community events throughout the school year.

Room Parents

Room Parents help cultivate community in their child's classroom by organizing classroom community building events like picnics, potlucks and play dates. Room Parents also help promote and recruit parent volunteers for community events and festivals, as well as coordinate staff appreciation efforts within their community. Each year one Room Parent also serves as the

Room Parent Coordinator. The coordinator serves as a liaison between the Room Parents and the administrative team and assists with the organization of Room Parent meetings.

Speak with your Lead Guide if you have interest in becoming a Room Parent or Room Parent Coordinator this year.

School Events and Fundraising

We host several events at Athena throughout the school year to build community and have fun. Our goal is to keep community building and fundraising efforts separate, so that we can gather as a community and have fun without the continual pressure of fundraising. There may be some charges at community events, which go towards covering the costs of the event. These charges typically include entry fees and ticket sales for food and drink.

Each year, we also typically host one large, adult-only, fundraising event, specifically designed for the adults in the community to not only have fun, but also to raise money which is applied to our fundraising goal for the year. Our annual fundraising letter will outline our needs and goals for fundraising each year so that if you have the means and desire to help us reach our goals, you will know how to do so with an understanding of where your dollars are being spent.

Volunteering for Events

To coordinate volunteer efforts for each community event, we typically utilize SignUp Genius or a similar online volunteer service which allows you to view and sign-up for specific shifts at each event. To volunteer to work the day before or the day of an event, keep an eye out for an online sign-up link in our monthly newsletters preceding each community event.

Ways To Stay Connected

School Calendar

Each year we will provide you with a hard copy of our annual School Calendar containing important dates related to school, such as parent conferences, holidays and other school closures. The school calendar is also accessible on the Calendar page of our website and copies are available in our front office.

We also have a Google Calendar for Parents that we recommend you sync with your personal calendar. Visit the Calendar page of our website for instructions or contact the office for assistance.

Monthly School Newsletter and Calendar

Our monthly school newsletter and calendar are emailed to all families at the beginning of each month. Newsletters include program updates, policy reminders, birthday announcements, enrollment updates, community event details, parent workshop info, parenting tips, important dates and deadlines and more! Included with the monthly newsletter is our monthly calendar. Each calendar announces important dates, including events, activities, and parent volunteer meetings, as well as extracurricular schedules and drop-off and pick-up times for each classroom.

Website

Our annual school calendar, monthly calendars, newsletters, and information about upcoming events are all available on our website. Details can be found on the Calendar page of our website. Look in the right hand column for monthly newsletters as well as information about upcoming events.

Facebook

LIKE us on Facebook and you will receive articles, notifications on fun family events, school announcements, updates, and workshops.

Whiteboards and Flyers

Administration and guides may post notices in the enclosed bulletin board cases on our entrance gates or put whiteboards at school entrances with important and timely information. Keep an eye out for flyers on our Parent Boards posted near the office front door and near entrances around campus.

TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA

The effects of media exposure and technology on growing minds and bodies has become a hot topic in recent years considering the increasing levels of interaction and exposure young children have with both. We are committed to speaking with you directly if we perceive any issues arising in the classroom or playgrounds that may involve or impact your child related to branded characters or media. Along these lines, guides will discourage role-playing in the classrooms or playgrounds based on branded media-related characters in an effort to minimize unsafe play and to encourage original thought and imaginative play. Please also be sure to read the clothing section of this handbook for other media-related guidelines.

The guides may use phones, tablets, or laptops for purposes of photo documentation and record keeping. We do not currently use any form of technology for use with the children in our classrooms, as it is not a part of the Montessori preschool curriculum.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's use of technology or exposure to media, we encourage you to speak directly with your child's guide and/or our Founder. Again, we also encourage you to read more on the topic by visiting the Parent Resource page of our website.

FIELD TRIPS AND TRANSPORTATION

Athena Montessori Academy schedules occasional field trips for the children. On your Enrollment Contract is a section where you can give your consent for field trips and related transportation. Prior to any scheduled field trip every parent and guardian will be notified, given information in writing, and asked to sign a Permission Form. Because Athena staff members are not allowed to transport children (other than their own), parents will be asked to volunteer to act as chaperones and provide the necessary transportation. Tots field trips require that every child have a minimum of one guardian on the field trip. On the Primary field trips, parents can carpool assigned groups of children, and driver lists with phone numbers will be provided as needed. Car seats must be provided for all students being transported at any given time.

PHOTOGRAPHY

We often take photographs of the children engaging in various activities. These photographs will primarily be used for sharing with parents, for display in the classrooms and office, or in school scrapbooks and albums for the children. Occasionally we will use these photographs on our school website, in brochures and advertisements, or as part of other promotional material. You can choose whether or not to authorize Athena's use of your child's image for promotional purposes on your Enrollment Contract. If your child has a listed allergy, Athena will post their picture in the classroom alongside their allergy information. This procedure allows all adults entering the classroom to easily match your child with their allergy action plan and serves as an additional layer of safety and awareness around the health needs of each child.

BIRTHDAYS

In honor of your child's special day, your child will be recognized during a special Birthday Circle. Your child's Guide will share more specific information with you related to your child's birthday celebration.

If you plan to send invitations to school for a birthday party, please ensure that there are enough for the entire class. Check with your guide on the classroom policy for distributing invitations.

In line with our “no dessert” policy explained above, we ask that you refrain from sending any sugary treats to school. If you wish to celebrate your child’s birthday at school, please speak directly with your child’s guide to hear their recommendations and preferences on how you can do so, such as donating a book or plant to the class.

WATER PLAY AND ANIMALS

Occasionally the children will engage in water play that includes such things as sprinklers, rainwater, and water tables. The children will also be responsible for watering their gardens with watering cans. If and when we plan any robust water activities such as swimming, each parent and guardian will be notified well in advance and asked to sign and return a Letter of Permission to be placed in your child’s file.

Animals, such as caterpillars, hamsters, butterflies, cats, tortoises, and fish, are part of the Montessori environment. Children will learn about the natural world through observation and care of these animals. We will ensure that our caregivers and children practice good hygiene and hand washing after handling or coming into contact with an animal and items used by an animal, such as water bowls, food holders, and cages. Our school cats have complete files that include records of shots, vaccinations, etc.

BREASTFEEDING

Athena is a breastfeeding-friendly campus, and nursing mothers are welcome to use the office or any other place on campus where they feel comfortable to breastfeed their child.

OUR DESIGNATION AS A GANG-FREE ZONE

As a result of House Bill 2086, which passed during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This statute requires that we distribute information about gang-free zones to our families.

What are gang-free zones and what is their purpose?

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location (in our case, Athena

Montessori Academy) where prohibited gang-related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The gang-free zone exists within a 1,000-foot perimeter of our school. Engaging in gang-related criminal activity or organized criminal activity within 1,000 feet of our school is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

LICENSING

We are licensed by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHS). Contact our local HHS office at (512) 834-3195 or <https://hhs.texas.gov> for questions or more information. You can view our most recent licensing report on the HHS website or view the posting in our office. A copy of the HHS Minimum Standards is also available for review in our office or on the HHS website.

Parent Policy Handbook Addendum 2020-2021 School Year Based on COVID-19 Revised Licensing Regulations

- The 2020-2021 School Year will not include Early Arrival or After School programs until regulations permit.
- The school day schedule and the annual school calendar are subject to change at the discretion of school leadership, based on evolving circumstances related to the pandemic.
- Extracurricular Programs previously offered by our partners will be suspended until we are permitted to reinstate them and deem it safe and feasible to do so.
- All food, including snacks and lunch, must be provided by the family and sent to school each day. There will be neither family-style food service nor food preparation activities in the classrooms based on current regulations.
- Students will be required to keep multiple changes of clothes on campus in the event of exposure to bodily fluids (theirs or other's) and labeled reusable plastic bags in which to store soiled clothing.
- Based on current guidelines, moving children to separate buildings for their nap period will no longer be possible. We will attempt to have all nappers in the Primary Program stay in their classroom during nap period. All children in the class will have a quiet rest period during which nappers will have their nap mats and all children will settle while the guide reads to them. Non-nappers will be permitted to work quietly in a different part of the room or in the outdoor work space while the nappers sleep. We will evaluate each child's needs throughout this process to ensure we are providing adequate rest time. We will remain in contact with parents if we determine a child needs Half Day pick up to better accommodate their needs.
- Classroom placement decisions will still be made thoughtfully and with your child's best interests in mind. We will strive to maintain consistency and continue to progress your

child along the growth and development path we hold dearly. Initially, the traditional Montessori mixed-age groups may not be possible. However, this will remain a key factor in the design process as we cultivate the optimum classroom environment balance.

- All students will be Health Screened upon arrival. There will be a questionnaire and no-touch temperature check administered before children are allowed on campus. If a child's temperature is above 99.6° F, they will be sent home and allowed to return to school after 24 fever free hours without temperature-reducing medication.
- To minimize campus traffic, Drop off & Pick up will happen at your car either in our parking lot off Ben White or on Morgan Lane based on a schedule that staggers arrivals. Parents will only be allowed on campus in case of emergency or a prearranged visit.
- We ask that all families practice self-quarantine procedures as recommended by the CDC when traveling, especially via air travel. We will continue to follow the guidance from local authorities and the CDC and will ask that you coordinate with the leadership team when you are planning trips that may require a subsequent quarantine period for your child.
- We ask that all families practice social distancing, hygiene, and safety protocols implemented and advised at the local and Federal levels when not at school. And we ask that everyone in our community maintain a respectful and responsible attitude toward keeping our whole community safe.
- If a child shows symptoms including, but not limited to, a fever of over 99.6° F, shortness of breath, or chronic coughing, we will contact the parents immediately and ask that they or a guardian collect the child right away. The child and one caregiver will be moved to a separate room where they can wait until the parents/guardians arrival.
- If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 on campus, including staff members or students, we will contact our Licensing Representative and the Austin Health Department immediately. We are then required to follow their guidance regarding campus closure and duration. We will notify all enrolled families and communicate the necessary information, preserving the anonymity of the affected person(s). We will then proceed with cleaning and disinfecting protocols to ensure the space will be safe to reopen when deemed appropriate.
- In the event of a resurgence of the COVID-19 virus and based on the recommendations or orders of the local Health Department, Government, or CDC guidelines, Athena may be required to close its campus during the course of the school year. Should a closure become necessary, we will move swiftly to reinstate virtual learning and connection programs that align with our Mission and Core Values. In spite of a closure, tuition requirements will remain. Failure to maintain tuition obligations will result in a student withdrawal and Athena will not be able to guarantee a spot for re-enrollment upon the school's reopening.
- Other school policies and procedures are subject to change at the sole discretion of leadership based on the evolving guidelines and recommendations of Local and Federal Health and Safety Authorities.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Handbook. Please give us a call if you have any questions or want more information about anything mentioned herein. Please be sure to log into your Parent Log-In online to give us your signed acknowledgement that you have read this Handbook.