

**Saint Mark Montessori Preschool**  
**1011 Eastwood Road**  
**Wilmington, North Carolina 28403**  
**(910) 398-6517**

**Introduction:**

St. Mark Preschool is a Montessori program with a nurturing Christian environment. The school is a non-profit organization founded by the St. Mark Parish community in 2000. The school offers programs for children ages three to five, 5 mornings a week, between the hours of 9:00 and 12:30. St. Mark Preschool offers children a high quality of academic experience, administered with an enthusiastic, loving approach.

St. Mark Montessori Preschool offers a unique cycle of learning designed to take advantage of the child's sensitive years between the ages of three and five. A child who acquires the basic skills of reading and arithmetic in this natural way has the advantage of beginning his/her education without the drudgery or discouragement of a more traditional school setting.

By letting the child pursue their individual interests in a Montessori classroom the child gains an early enthusiasm for learning, which is key to becoming a truly educated person.

**Parish Mission:** To become a grace filled community in Christ by proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord with all our words and actions. Through the liturgical assembly and the administration of sacraments, we strengthen the worship of God while creating an environment of welcome for all on behalf of Christ.

**St. Mark Preschool Philosophy:** Our belief is that an appropriate preschool experience provides an environment that allows freedom to work, explore and discover the wonders of God's world. By providing a curriculum that integrates all areas of a child's development, we believe that children can learn and reach their maximum potential.

**St. Mark Preschool Mission:** St. Mark Preschool strives to provide a Catholic preschool experience using Montessori principles to create a safe, nurturing environment where adults and children respect the unique qualities of each individual and encourage all children to learn and grow at their own pace.

**Goals:**

- ~to cultivate a child's natural desire to learn
- ~to allow the absorbent mind of the child to investigate and explore his/her surroundings at his/her own periods of interest and readiness
- ~to cultivate an appreciation and respect for all that God created

## **Maria Montessori**

Maria Montessori was born in Chiaravalle, Italy, August 31, 1870. Her parents tried to convince her to become a teacher, but Maria was interested in mathematics and engineering. In 1883, Montessori attended a technical school where she became interested in biology and the field of medicine, which Pope Leo declared to be “the best profession for women.” In 1896, Montessori became the first woman doctor to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School. She joined the staff of the University Psychiatric clinic where she worked with developmentally delayed children. In 1900, she returned to the University of Rome to study philosophy, psychology, and anthropology. In 1907, Montessori opened the first “Casa de Bambini” (Children’s House) in the slums of SanLorenzo, Italy. It was here that Montessori first realized the powerful learning abilities of the younger child and witnessed the conversion of the child through normalization. By 1909, all of Italian Switzerland was using the Montessori method in all of their orphan asylums and children’s houses. In 1910, the teaching of religion was developed in a Casa in Barcelona. In 1912, Montessori made her first visit to the U.S. and the American Montessori Association was formed. In 1915, a Montessori classroom was set up at the San Francisco World’s Fair where it won two gold medals for education. In 1922, Montessori was appointed government inspector of school in Italy. In 1934, because of her resistance to the policies of Mussolini, Montessori was banned in Italy. She spent her exile in India where she developed the 6-12 curriculum and worked for peace. In 1946, Montessori returned to Europe where she lectured on “the child as the constructor of peace”. In 1952, Dr. Maria Montessori died at age 81, and is buried in Holland.

### ***The Montessori Experience***

***Progressing through the Montessori experience,***

***Children develop respect for themselves and others***

***Gain confidence ion their abilities***

***Find joy in discovery***

***Realize their place in the world and their responsibility for the same***

***Evolve into competent, critical thinkers***

***And discover that learning is for life.***

## **The First Day of Preschool**

On the first day of school your child may be somewhat tearful and have some misgivings about going to school. This is a natural response to a new situation. Your child will have already met the teacher and visited the classroom, so we ask that you smile assuredly, say goodbye, and leave quickly. Prolonged good-byes often increase, rather than alleviate, a child's anxiety. The teacher greeting at the Welcome Circle will help the child enter his / her classroom. The children soon become accustomed to this morning ritual.

During the orientation period - that is, the first week or two of school – each child will be gradually introduced to the classroom environment. She / he will be shown where the bathroom is, where to hang coats, and what the general classroom procedure and ground rules are. She / he will also be making new friends and getting to know the teacher. It is possible, therefore, that during these first weeks of adjustment she / he may temporarily regress in certain areas; e.g. toilet training. This is normal behavior.

As the school situation becomes more familiar to the child and as she / he becomes more involved with the environment, a cycle of activity will emerge; this may be observed not only during a day's time span but also over a period of a year. During this time her / his emotional, social, physical and intellectual development will most likely progress in spurts rather than in a continuous linear pattern. Given this, we try to view the total child from a broad, long-term perspective.

## **Ground Rules**

We have prepared this list of goals for the first few weeks of school to allow you to see what our expectations are for your children as they learn to work and play together. Your insights into your child's background and patterns of behavior can help us work cooperatively to reinforce these basic goals so your child can move forward during the year and have a happy and enriching experience.

**After the first five or six weeks of school, we expect each child to be able to:**

1. Understand the classroom rules of safety and respect:
  - ~walking, rather than running, in the classroom
  - ~using a quiet speaking voice
  - ~speaking and acting kindly to others-no hurting by name calling or in any physical way
2. Choose work, follow through, and return work to its original place ready for the next person. This helps develop focus, concentration, and coordination necessary for the child to move ahead with more advanced activities and feel a growing sense of inner order and peace.
3. Respect the work of others by not interrupting, and by assisting only when invited.
4. Respect the rights of others to be able to listen and participate in group activities by sitting quietly and taking turns when responding to questions or participating in games.
5. Cooperate with the teachers by being able to listen and follow simple directions such as, "Please come to circle" or "It's time to change our shoes to go outside."

Respect, manners and cooperation are needed to function well socially in the group situation of the classroom and later in society.

**We are looking forward to a very enjoyable year.**

## **Policies and Procedures:**

### **Administrator**

The administrator is responsible for co-ordination of the implementation of school policy and the general operation of the school. In addition, all financial matters should be referred to the administrator.

General information about schedules, financial info, class lists, etc. can be obtained from the office. If you have questions or suggestions you wish to share, please drop a note, call, or arrange a meeting with the administrator. The administrator will generally be available to meet with parents Monday-Friday after 12:00, as well as anytime Wednesday by appointment.

### **Application & Admissions**

Saint Mark Montessori Preschool admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to the students at the school.

**SMMP admits children for the preschool that will reach their third birthday by August 31<sup>st</sup>, and are completely toilet trained.** This complies with both Diocesan and North Carolina State laws governing Early Childhood Centers.

Before attending classes, SMMP requires the completion of the medical form and a current immunization card.

A \$60.00 (non-refundable) application fee is to be submitted at the time of application.

### **Arrival Procedures**

Drop off time: 9:00 – 9:15 am

All children will be greeted at their car each morning by a teacher who will help the child out of their seat restraint and shut the door. Children will be escorted to the classroom.

**Parents are asked to remain in their cars to keep the traffic moving.**

If you are late (after 9:15), please escort your child into the classroom.

**Arriving for class on time is important for every child. Late arrival hampers a child's ability to establish a constructive cycle of activity and interrupts the flow of the classroom.**

## **Attendance Policy**

SMMP asks parents to call the school office to notify us if a student will not be attending. In particular, we need to know of any contagious disease (including strep throat) so that we can send out a health notice.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

SMMP celebrates birthdays in a special way. During circle time on your child's birthday, we will have a brief ceremony. The child holds a globe of the Earth and walks around the circle one time for each year of his/her life. A candle is placed in the center of the circle to symbolize the sun. This demonstrates the earth's revolutions around the sun, and the fact that it takes the earth one year to go around one time. While the child walks around the circle, we would like you to be able to share something about each year of his/her life with the rest of the children. If you could send in one or two anecdotes from each year, it would be great. If you would like to be in the class for the celebration, we would be happy to have you.

## **Birthday Snacks**

If you would like to bring in a special snack to celebrate your child's birthday, please let the teacher know in advance.

**Please mail invitations to birthday parties rather than distributing them at school.**

## **Bring To / From School (i.e. "show and tell")**

Once a week, a show and tell bag will be sent home with an assigned child. When it is your child's turn, please have them share something from nature, a favorite book, a picture of themselves doing a special activity, or a cultural item from a trip. Contact the teacher if advance planning is necessary.

Please return promptly any unfamiliar objects brought home from school by your child. These may be pieces from school equipment, which is unusable until the piece is replaced.

**Leave at home: toys, candy, jewelry, etc.**

## **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**

Once a week the children go to the atrium, a special classroom designed for their religious education. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd curriculum originated in 1954 in Rome, and was inspired by the Montessori principles of education.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is not primarily academic in character. Rather, it seeks to be an experience of life and an education in faith, through the celebration of an encounter with the Father, in listening to Jesus the one Teacher, and in obedience to the Spirit.

### **Chain of Command**

If you have a question or concern regarding policy, procedures, administration, teachers, or students, they can be addressed following the chain of command of: teacher, administrator, pastor.

### **Classroom Observations**

SMMP has an open observation policy. Observation visits can be scheduled after October 23<sup>rd</sup> of each year by calling the school to reserve a time slot. Only two adult visitors will be scheduled for visits during each time slot.

Prospective parents are encouraged to observe in the classroom for at least one hour as part of the application process.

### **Clothing**

It is suggested that children wear easy to launder play clothes. Children should be able to use the bathroom by themselves – often toilet accidents happen because a child's clothing is too difficult for him/her to handle. Please avoid overalls, sun suits, pants with heavy snaps and belts. Also, boots, clogs and flip-flops are discouraged, as they tend to be dangerous when children are running and playing. A good criterion is can the child put it on him/herself in the morning? Although children will wear aprons and smocks when working with water, paints, etc., accidents happen. Children will avoid potentially messy works if they are overdressed and afraid to get dirty.

We ask each parent to send in a complete change of clothes for your child (underwear and socks too!) labeled in a gallon size zip-lock bag. In case of accidents, wet clothing will be sent home in the bag. **Remember, as the seasons change, the spare clothing will need to reflect current weather conditions.**

The children will play outside each day that it is dry enough. In cold weather, please send gloves or mittens, and a hat for hoodless garments. Indoors, children often choose to work on the floor, slacks or tights may increase the comfort and freedom of movement of girls in dresses.

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**Label clothing.** Unidentified clothing will be put in the school lost and found.

## **Confidentiality of Student Records**

The contents of students' file are open only to authorized school personnel, parents, guardians, or a case working agency upon request per federal and state policies. Student records may only be reviewed on school premises. Parents may be given a copy of their child's file when transferring to another school. The original records are retained indefinitely in the school office.

## **Discipline Policy**

Procedures and ground rules in the classroom are structured to foster the growth of self-direction and self-discipline. These expectations are based on respect: of each person for every other person in our classroom community; for the room and the materials which we share; and ultimately, of each person for his/herself.

Our classroom management presumes that behavior will be followed by natural and logical consequence. If a child behaves inappropriately in the classroom we:

1. Remind the child of the ground rules.
2. Separate the child from the situation.
  - a. Ask the child to put away work that is being mishandled.
  - b. Ask the child to move to a different location.
3. Ask the child to come and stay by the teacher (to watch someone else's lesson perhaps.)
4. Tell the child to stay in a particular spot (at a table or chair) until the teacher gives permission to finish work.
5. Remove the child from the classroom to the hallway until the child chooses to re-enter the classroom with appropriate behavior.

We minimize the use of negative phrases such as "No, you can't do that" and substitute positive language: "You may do the counting work after you put away your puzzle." "If you want to continue pouring, you must use the materials carefully." The focus is not on the adults' power to control the room, but rather on the child's power and will to make successful decisions.

Repeated behavioral problems will result in a request for a parent- teacher conference. This conference will enable us to try and solve the problem together, and help us gain insight as to the possible causes of the behavior. If the behavior does not resolve itself, the family may be asked to withdraw the child from the school.

## Dismissal

Dismissal is at 12:30. Children will be dismissed to their parents from the playground during nice weather and from the classroom during inclement weather. The children must be signed out with the teacher by their designated guardian/ caregiver each day. If you would like to join us for playtime, you may do so on the playground at 12:15.

If you will be unavoidably delayed in picking up your child because of an emergency, please call the school and leave a message. If we are unable to reach you by telephone after regular dismissal time, we will call your emergency back up to pick your child up.

## Emergencies

Minor accidents occurring during class receive the prompt and careful attention of staff members. Our teachers are certified by the Red Cross in both first aid and infant and child CPR. In the event of illness or serious accident, the family is notified at once and arrangements are made for the child to be taken home or to his / her physician. Parents are strenuously urged to inform the school of any change of telephone numbers during the year. In cases of emergency, when the parents cannot be reached, the child will be taken to the nearest hospital emergency room.

## Health Policy

In order to protect the health of the children and staff, we ask that parents keep children at home if they are contagious, too sick to participate in class activities, or will prevent the teacher from performing her duties.

If the school determines that a child is too sick to be at school, the parents of that child are responsible for picking their child up from school within a reasonable period of time.

It is requested that parents:

- Keep their child at home until she / he is fever free for 24 hours.  
**(Do not send children to school on fever-reducing medication.)**
- Keep their child at home until 24 hours have elapsed since the first dose of antibiotics,
- Keep their child at home until the results of a throat culture are known.

- Keep their child at home if mucous is discolored

### **Kindermusik**

The children go to Kindermusik classes once a week. The classes are taught by Sandy Errante. In Kindermusik, the children are led through joyful activities using music and movement. The learning process continues at home guided by specially designed books, CDs and games.

### **Materials and Fees**

There is a \$200 Kindermusik and materials fee. The only materials you are asked to provide are slippers, a picture for your child's cubby, and a change of clothes in a plastic bag.

### **Medications**

If a child requires medication during the school day, you will need to fill out a form in the office and leave the form and medicine there. Teachers at the car doors will not accept either medication or instructions.

### **Medical Forms / Immunizations**

State law requires that all children have a certificate of immunization on file by the first day of school. Attendance is contingent on the medical /immunization records being on file. The law has certain specific requirements regarding immunization, so if you have questions, please let us know.

### **Parent – Teacher communications and conferences**

Parents are always encouraged to discuss with the teachers any aspects of their child's development or possible problems; however, formal Parent –Teacher Conferences are scheduled in the fall and in the spring (see calendar) to inform the parents of the child's current academic and social progress.

The teachers are eager to know of any changes in the child or in family life - anything that might provide insight into the behavior of the child. Anything occurring in school should be reported as well. Teachers appreciate your observations of school surroundings and of your child's growth in relation to the school.

Please do not expect staff members to discuss details of your child's progress during arrivals or dismissal with children present. Please do not hamper the flow of traffic with discussions at the car. However, we invite you to park and arrange a mutually convenient time to talk, give a note directly to the teacher (or leave it

in the office), or call the school office to request a call-back. There is a mailbox located outside the classroom in which you may leave any correspondence for the staff. We will check this box and respond at our earliest opportunity without diverting our attention from the children during the school day.

### **School cancellations and delays**

We will follow the cancellations and delays of New Hanover County Schools for snow, hurricane, or other weather emergencies. However, in the case that New Hanover County schools have a 2 hour delay, the preschool will have a 1 hour delay with school starting at 10:00.

### **Snacks and Nutrition**

A balanced breakfast starts the day off right. Children will bring a snack each day in a small container **clearly marked with the child's name**. At the start of the year, we will all eat snack together to help foster our sense of community. We will then set up an individual snack table where the children may go to enjoy their snack at any point during the morning. **Please try to pack a healthy snack that will provide your child with the energy and focus they need to get through the day.** Some examples of appropriate snacks are: cut up fruit or vegetables, cheese and crackers, a half sandwich, bagel, or muffin. Please send snack in a ready to be eaten state. (i.e. no oranges for the teacher to peel) Remember that this is not lunch. Snack should be of a small enough portion that it can be enjoyed in a 5-10 minute time frame.

### **Teacher Workdays**

Teacher workdays provide time to the teaching staff for any of the following purposes; working on the physical classroom environment, doing research for new materials, making new materials, planning curriculum for the upcoming month, training assistants or substitutes, preparing for parent-teacher conferences, attending pertinent workshops or observing in other schools.

### **Tuition Payment Policy**

The yearly tuition is divided into nine equal monthly payments, due by the fifth of each month, **September through May**. Those choosing to have their tuition payments automatically debited from their bank account may do so. The automatic debits will occur the first day of each month. **A ten-dollar service charge will be added to any tuition payment not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month.**