



Parent/Guardian Handbook

Table of Contents

Welcome to BCMS!

- 4 • Welcome!
- 4 • BCMS Mission Statement
- 4 • BCMS Philosophy
- 5 • BCMS History - A Letter from the Founder of BCMS

What is Montessori?

- 6 • A Teacher and Her Method
- 7 • The Sensitive Periods
- 7 • Curriculum
- 7 • Environment
- 8 • Practical Information

The Year of Mastery

- 8 • Kindergarten at BCMS

Our Staff

- 10 • Professionally Trained Teachers
- 10 • Monthly Faculty Meeting

BCMS and Your Child

Planning for a New and Exciting Experience

- 11 • Visiting Before Starting
- 11 • Visiting Guidelines
- 12 • Letting Go

What to Bring, What to Leave at Home

- 12 • Cubbies
- 13 • An Extra Set of Clothing
- 13 • Comfort Items for Nap Time
- 13 • Appropriate Clothing
- 13 • Outer Clothing
- 14 • Rainy/Cold Days
- 14 • Sunny Days
- 14 • Please Leave Toys and Jewelry at Home
- 14 • Lost and Found

Common Questions

- 15 •

BCMS Routine

- 16 • Signing In and Out
- 17 • No Cell Phone Policy
- 17 • The Basic Daily Routine
- 17 • Morning Routine
- 18 • Food - Snacks and Lunch
- 18 • Nap Time
- 19 • After School Program
- 19 • After Hours Emergency Care

Special Events

- 19 • On-site Field Trips
- 20 • Birthdays at BCMS

Parents as Partners

Working Together for Success

- 21 • Communication
- 21 • Notes/Incident Reports
- 22 • Cooperative Learning - Helping Your Child Succeed
- 24 • Discipline at BCMS
- 24 • Potty Training

Staying Healthy and Well

- 25 • Immunization Requirements
- 25 • Immunization Exemption
- 25 • BCMS Illness Policies
- 27 • Medicine at School

Parent Support

- 28 • Parent/Teacher Conferences
- 29 • Buddy Parents
- 29 • BCMS Yahoo! Group
- 29 • *Week in Review* E-Mails
- 30 • BCMS Shutterfly Site
- 30 • BCMS Parent Seminars
- 30 • Big City Parents Organization (BCPO)
- 30 • Our Community

Business Together

BCMS Contract Policies

- 31 • Leave of Absence/Vacation
- 31 • Disaster Preparedness
- 32 • School Holidays/Closings
- 32 • Third Friday - Early Closure
- 32 • Sibling Discount
- 32 • Terms of Payment
- 33 • Re-Enrollment
- 33 • Termination
- 33 • Early Withdrawal/Required Notice
- 33 • Early Withdrawal Penalty
- 33 • Late Payments

In Closing

- 34 •

Welcome to BCMS!

Welcome!

Welcome to Big City Montessori School (BCMS). We are excited that you have become part of the BCMS family. Together we will be able to give your child a wonderful first school experience. Your child will grow and develop many skills that will lead to life-long learning. This parent handbook will give you a greater understanding of BCMS and the Montessori Method.

BCMS Mission Statement

We believe education is preparation for life. By fostering cooperation, respect for oneself and others, we empower our children to be confident and self-motivated individuals with a life-long enthusiasm for learning.

BCMS Philosophy

Founded in 1972 by Meighen and Robert Tideman, Big City Montessori School is the oldest family-owned and operated preschool in San Francisco. Their vision was to create an environment where children from all walks of life could have a space outside of the home to feel comfortable and learn. Since its inception, BCMS has successfully provided a safe and nurturing environment for children, graduating students to the finest schools in San Francisco.

BCMS moved to its current location in 1980. This was the year that the current directress, their daughter Amanda Riccetti, began her work in Montessori. Beginning with after school care, taking her turn with Montessori teaching, and taking over as directress in 1999, Amanda has touched every role within the school. This understanding helps her keep the tenure of her staff, which directly relates to the emotional security of your child.

BCMS History - A Letter from the Founder of BCMS

January 2007

Dear Parents:

I chose Montessori for my daughter Amanda when she was three years old. I had read a lot about the method and everything about it appealed to me. A year later her sister Marijke joined her at Gateway Montessori School in San Francisco.

After two years of watching their response to a Montessori education, I decided to take the training and become a Montessori teacher myself. This would enable me to work and still have time with my children.

I graduated with honors from the Montessori Education Center in Palo Alto in 1969. This center was accredited by the Association Montessori Internationale and was headed by Lena Wickramaratne, who had been trained by Dr. Montessori herself.

After graduation I was invited by Ms. Wickramaratne to join the center as a teacher in the laboratory school and as an assistant teacher trainer. While I was working there a parent approached me one day after school and said she thought I ought to have my own school and that if I was willing to try she would lend me the capital to begin. She had two little girls in my class and she used to sit in the observation room and watch the class in session. She liked my teaching style and wanted to help me have my own school.

Things fell miraculously into place when another parent told me her brother was a minister and that his church was in financial trouble and needed to find another source of income. I met with the minister and asked to rent the social hall as a Montessori classroom, and thus began Westlake Montessori School in 1972.

After working there for 8 years another minister came to the church and he didn't want to continue the lease so I found another building and moved my school into San Francisco, out of the suburbs and into the "big city", and thus was born Big City Montessori School in 1980.

Meanwhile, my daughter Amanda was growing up in the school, helping to clean and paint on Saturdays, doing chores in the office, working part time in the after school care program while she was in school, and then working full time after finishing school.

She is still there. All of my children were educated there and my grandchildren and great-granddaughter as well. I have retired and passed the school on to Amanda, who is doing a better job than I ever did.

Sincerely,
Meighen Tideman
Founder/Montessori Educator

What is Montessori?

A Teacher and Her Method



Dr. Maria Montessori was the first educator to realize the capacity of young children to learn and to systematically examine how the young child learns best. She believed that all children have a natural desire to learn and given the opportunity will absorb everything in their culture and environment. She identified the most sensitive period for learning as that between birth to age six. The Montessori Method has been proven for over 100 years and is known and taught world-wide.

Dr. Montessori once said:

~“The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age six. For that is the time when man’s intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed.”

~“The essence of independence is to be able to do something for one’s self.”

~“Adults work to finish a task, but the child works in order to grow, and is working to create the adult, the person that is to be. Such experience is not just play...it is work he must do in order to grow up.”

The Montessori philosophy and curriculum fosters love of learning and self-growth. Through the work, children develop tools for learning that will prepare them for life.

The Sensitive Periods

Sensitive periods are times in the child's life when they are driven by nature to acquire a new skill or concept. During this time, learning will be easier than any other time in life. Here are just a few examples: From newborn to two years of age, they are in the sensitive stage of language; from three to five years of age, they are refining small motor skills, such as forming letters; and from four to six years of age, they are refining reading skills.

Curriculum

The Montessori Curriculum is an integrated thematic approach that ties together separate disciplines into studies of the physical universe, the world of nature, and the human experience. In this way, one lesson leads to many others.

Each material isolates one concept or skill that has been specially designed so children are naturally drawn to work with it. Each material has also been designed so a child can check his own work – what Montessori calls “control of error.” These are tools that lead to independence, and that let children see abstract ideas presented in concrete, three-dimensional ways. The tools also help them grasp and understand what they are working on, and allow each child to work at their own pace.

The curriculum is divided into areas: Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language, Sciences, Geography, and Art. The curriculum is always developing and growing with the children.

Environment

The “prepared environment” of the Montessori classroom sets the stage for learning. The children are free to work and learn independently, choosing and engaging in purposeful activities. The teacher's role is to facilitate the environment. Concentration, inner discipline, and motivation develop naturally as the children discover and explore.

The other most important aspect to a Montessori environment is the mixed-age groups. Older children become teachers while developing leadership skills. Younger children observe and assimilate what they see and hear from the older children. Often the result is that when the teacher is ready to give a lesson to a younger child, they already have a grasp of it or already know it.

As children work at their own pace, engaging in age and developmentally appropriate activities, they become problem solvers, leaders, challenge seekers, and develop a greater self-awareness.

In this prepared environment, children absorb everything that is part of their culture and acquire tools they will need for life skills. They do this without getting tired or fatigued. The teacher is both part of this learning environment and the dynamic link between it and the learner. The teacher's mission is to create a safe, beautiful and enriched environment where children can learn to master and develop their natural skills for life.

Practical Information

BCMS has a structured schedule. This structure is necessary to maintain consistency for both the child and the program. In the classroom there is a balance between direct and indirect instruction. The mixed-age classroom allows for accelerated social-emotional growth and increased exposure to language. Reading and writing derive almost exclusively from exposure to language.

The large classrooms provide opportunity for many more social interactions. The Montessori Method relies on peer teaching and modeling. Instead of children relying only on adults to provide direction, they look to one another. The enriched environment is a framework for your child's development, supporting individualized learning in addition to the Montessori Method.

The Year of Mastery

Kindergarten at BCMS

The year of BCMS Kindergarten is one of completion. **The child masters all areas of work.** He/she becomes the leader, the one others look up to for support and guidance. BCMS Kindergarten children become teachers as they help the little ones tie shoes or with completing a puzzle. They love to feel how much they understand compared to younger classmates. Math, language, and writing take up the majority of their class time.

The best way to sum up the three- to four-year process may be to look at each year in terms of the following stages: Watcher, Worker, and Teacher. The two and three-year olds are Watchers, absorbing everything going on in the environment. The four-year-old is a Worker, who now confidently moves through the materials he/she so carefully observed the year before. The five-year-old is the Teacher, who is mastering all the work, teaching others, and combining and applying his/her knowledge to bigger endeavors (writing sentences to go with the picture he/she created, taking pride in his/her ability to move from the concrete to abstract with math problems, etc.).

Several important differences between what BCMS offers the five-year-old and what is offered by many of today's kindergarten programs:

- BCMS engages the young child in “**learning how to learn**”. The mixed-age classes provide our kindergarteners with abundant opportunities to develop leadership skills, responsibility, experience a greater social diversity. Another key point is interest and readiness for advanced work. If a child is not ready to move on, they are not left behind or made to feel like a failure, and if a child is advanced, the sky is the limit. Young five-year-olds who miss the cut-off date for kindergarten will be able to complete our program and have the opportunity to repeat kindergarten or go directly to first grade.

- BCMS is focused on **“teaching for understanding”** - not for testing. The child in a BCMS Kindergarten is ready to reinforce and internalize. The opportunities of freedom of choice, movement and communication help develop inner discipline. The child’s freedom to repeat an activity develops concentration, which Montessori says is the only true foundation for education.
- BCMS teaches and expects much more than competency in the basic skills. We want the children to **enjoy school and feel good about themselves as students**. We know this takes place in the Kindergarten year. This is done through the absorbent mind and the sensitive periods as explained by Dr. Montessori; according to her, these periods diminish around age six.

If a child has not had time to internalize these early concrete experiences, as they would during BCMS Kindergarten, their early learning often evaporates because it is neither reinforced nor commonly understood.

Once your child had developed a high degree of self-confidence, independence, and enthusiasm for the learning process, they can adapt to all sorts of new situations. They blossom into children who are ready for the new adventures ahead of them.

By the end of age five BCMS children are curious, self-confident learners who look forward to going to school. They are engaged, enthusiastic learners who honestly want to learn and ask questions. They also respect themselves, others, and the environment.

The BCMS education is the bridge to life-long learning; BCMS Kindergarten is the strength of the bridge.

Our Staff

Professionally Trained Teachers

BCMS has 6 fantastic **AMI Montessori credentialed teachers**. Two are assigned to each classroom. In each class we have a *head* AMI Montessori teacher, a *co*-AMI Montessori teacher, and two **ECE assistant teachers** accredited by the state of California. In addition we have a large support staff of ECE accredited teachers, outside the classroom, who work as part of our team.

Our staff has CPR training, and our two directors have CPR and First Aid training that is updated every two years.

The School Director is:

Mrs. Amanda Riccetti

The School Co-Director is:

Mrs. Hilma Perez

The Head AMI Montessori Teacher are:

Miss Soumya Lokumalage

Mr. Sanath Jayagoda

Mrs. Evelyn Castillo

The Co-AMI Montessori Teachers are:

Mr. Dinesh Lokumalage

Mr. Chaminda Lokumalage

Mrs. Achala Jayagoda

The ECE Assitant Classroom Teachers are:

Mrs. Patricia Ruiz

Mrs. Hilda Ruiz

Mrs. Flor Ramirez

Mrs. Carmen Garcia

Mrs. Maria Recinos

Mrs. Marta Perez

At BCMS each child is assigned to a classroom and stays with the same teacher for the entire length of time they are in our program. **The average tenure of our teaching staff is 8 to 15 years.** This benefits your child greatly, as our long tenured staff means more stability and consistency for your child. The teachers are able to observe your child's progress over time, know what they are ready for next, their strengths and weaknesses, and their individual personalities as they mature in our program. Additionally, it means so much to children when their community of classmates and friends is consistent and stays intact.

Monthly Faculty Meeting

BCMS supports life-long learning - just as Maria Montessori believed. At BCMS we never assume we are reaching our full potential, and want to bring training and growth to our teachers and new perspectives to our students.

BCMS closes early, at 3:00 p.m., the third Friday of every month, for staff development meetings. It is a chance for the staff to come together as a whole, look to the future, and renew our commitment to bring each child to his or her maximum potential.

Should you need to reference the school closure dates calendar you can find it posted on our website "Resources" page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/resources/>

BCMS and Your Child

Planning for a New and Exciting Experience

Visiting Before Starting

Beginning school at BCMS is an exciting event for parents/guardians, child, and the school. Prior to your child's first day, we suggest **visiting with your child as often as possible** during our afternoon program hours (3:00-5:45 p.m.). During this visitation period your child will become familiar with a new environment and new faces too. It is also an opportunity for parents/guardians to get to know other parents in the school.

Visiting Guidelines:

- It is not necessary to call ahead to schedule a visit. Just stop by the office to say "hello" when you arrive so we know you are visiting, etc. You are welcome to ask the office staff any questions you may have when visiting. Or, if you need assistance with anything, they would be happy to help you.
- You are welcome to sit and play with your child in our front room. However, **please supervise your child at all times** - this means accompanying them to the restroom, monitoring their interactions with others, showing them how to treat materials gently, how to put activities back where they got them, and respecting the environment.
- You are welcome to chat with other parents, but please keep your eyes on your child and supervise them at all times. **We have a no cell phone policy**, so please do not chat, text, or browse the web on your cell phone. Your child needs your full attention while visiting our environment.
- Please do not enter any of the classrooms, or the play yard, as our program is still in session for our students.
- If someone other than yourself will be bringing your child to visit (i.e.: nanny, grandparent, etc.), please inform them of the visiting guidelines as well.
- When planning your visits be sure to check the school calendar for early closure and holiday closure dates. You can find the calendar on our website "Resources" page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/resources/>

Letting Go

The first day often goes well. But, it's the second and the third day for some children that may be more challenging. Your child may go through separation anxiety. This is real and can last two to three weeks.

Many parents think if they stay for two or three minutes and get their child to play, they can sneak out and all will be wonderful. This actually makes the child *very* upset and *very* confused when they find you have left. They will become less trusting, and this may lead to a longer transition.

If your child is having difficulty separating from you, the best way to drop off is to ask a teacher to help you say goodbye quickly, and let your child see you leave. This will give your child a chance to start bonding with us and settle down. The sooner you separate and leave, the sooner your child will become engaged and forget their sadness at drop off.

When you pick up your child, however, we encourage you to spend five or ten minutes playing with your child in the front room. This will give your child a chance to relax with you, reconnect and have a good time before departing for home. Our front playroom is available from 3:00-5:54 p.m. for you and your child to reconnect and to show your child you enjoy hanging out at BCMS too.

Believe it or not, letting go is often harder on the parent than the child. Some children simply dislike the change of environment: Leaving home, getting out of the car, or going home from school. We understand how difficult separation is for both parents and children. By visiting before starting and showing your child that being at school is a fun and positive experience, the parent and child have the best chance for a tear-free first day. For some children, tears may be unavoidable, regardless of the number of times you visit, and this is completely normal as well.

What to Bring, What to Leave at Home

Cubbies

Each child is assigned a cubby of their own. Extra clothes, outerwear, artwork, and personal items are placed in a child's cubby. It is a great help if you get your child familiar with the location of his/her cubby. Get him/her to show you their cubby and help them learn to put their coat inside. A child's cubby is very important personal space that helps them feel a sense of belonging. Never let your child put food or toys in their cubby. We want to prevent ants and children from temptation.

Please do not bring your child's belongings in a backpack. The cubbies are very small and a backpack will not fit inside. We want to prevent any confusion as to where to find your child's items, and prevent the loss of a favorite backpack.

An Extra Set of Clothing

BCMS supplies a great deal of what your child needs for a school day. However, we do need you to bring in a set of extra clothing, labeled with your child's name (please also include socks and a pair of shoes). Children are more comfortable changing into their own things should there be a toileting accident, or spill at lunch, etc. **All clothes should be labeled with your child's name, then placed in a gallon-size zip lock bag with your child's name written on the outside of it.** This is kept in your child's cubby at all times, so it is available whenever necessary.

In the event that your child's clothes become soiled and need to be changed, we will place their soiled clothes in a plastic bag, write their name on it and place it in their cubby for you to take home and wash that day. We strongly encourage you to check your child's cubby periodically to make sure they have a full set of spare clothes available. Also, check to be sure that they have not outgrown their spare set and replenish your child's set of spare clothes as necessary. If there are no spare clothes available in your child's cubby, we will change them into spare "Big City" clothes, assuming we have some in your child's size. If your child goes home in Big City's spare clothes, please wash them at your earliest convenience and return them to the office.

Comfort Items for Nap Time

If your child needs a pacifier, bottle, sippy cup, or comfort item for nap time, you may bring that too. Again, please label or write your child's name on these items and give them to either your child's teacher or the office.

Appropriate Clothing

Children must have clothes that fit comfortably and that they can manage. This fosters independence and self-esteem. To avoid potty accidents, please do not have pants that require a belt that may be difficult to remove. Please help us keep the children safe by sending your child in shoes they can manage by themselves. This will give the teacher more time to keep their eyes on the children and keep them all safe.

Please do not send your child to school in clothing that you do not want ruined (i.e. garments of great sentimental and/or monetary value). Although we teach the children how to work neatly and carefully, they are children after all and they may stain or rip their clothing while at school. **We are not responsible for any stains or damages to clothing that your child wears to school.**

Please note: Do not send your child to school wearing flip flop sandals or Crocs. This is a matter of safety. These types of shoes are not intended for everyday use. Children need support for their growing feet. Each one of these types of shoes has no support, they easily come off, children's feet can be injured, and they can easily trip when they are running and playing.

When your child wears a skirt or dress to school please have them wear either **shorts or leggings underneath.** This is for her personal privacy when playing or sitting on the floor in circle or during work time.

Outer Clothing

Please be sure to write your child's name legibly on all outer clothing, and show him/her how to put it their cubby. Try to send the same jacket or sweater each time; this way we can get used to what your child wears, and it will help keep your child's outer clothing from getting lost.

BCMS is not responsible for lost items. With coats falling out of cubbies and different people picking up and dropping off children, things will go missing at times. Writing your child's name inside his/her jacket will help ensure that favorite jacket or sweater will come back home.

Rainy/Cold Days

BCMS has two large playrooms and a creative staff to keep the children engaged, should weather prohibit scheduled outside play. If possible, we request that you pick up your child a little early on these days - as staying inside for the entire day is hard on the children.

If you bring your child to school on a rainy day wearing rain boots and toting an umbrella, please remember that these items are too large to fit in their cubby. **Umbrellas can be closed and left in the front lobby area for retrieval upon exit.** If you want your child to change from boots into shoes, it is best to do this upon arrival and **leave boots in the lobby as well.**

Sunny Days

Please **apply sunscreen** to your child in the morning on sunny days. We will apply it again later in the day when the children go outside to play.

If you have a specific sunscreen you would like us to put on your child, please bring it to school, label it with your child's name, and give it to their teacher. We will store it here for use, and notify you when it is time to bring more.

If your child has especially sensitive skin, bringing a sun **hat** for them to wear when going outside is a good idea. It can be kept in their cubby and be retrieved whenever needed. The teachers will help to remind your child to wear their hat.

Please Leave Toys and Jewelry at Home

A shiny bracelet, fuzzy bear, or special toy can create big problems in a preschool environment. In addition to a child losing a favorite item, it opens the possibility of an argument with a classmate or distraction from a class lesson. **The item becomes the focus of attention. It's best to leave these items at home.** We realize some children are carriers and need to bring things with them. It is best to either leave the item in the car, or turn it in to the office immediately upon arrival so we can keep it safe and ensure it goes home with them. If your child is just not willing to give up the item when you drop them off, the teacher will have the child bring it to the office to turn in later. As an exception, we do allow younger children to bring in comfort items to help self-soothe during nap time.

Lost and Found

BCMS is not responsible for lost or broken items. When we find lost items, they are brought to the office. Please come to the office if you need help to find a lost item. We will try to locate it or direct you to the best place to find it.

Common Questions

- **Can I send my child to school with breakfast or bring food from home?**

If your child arrives before 8:15 a.m., and you want your child to eat something from home, you may send your child with food they can manage themselves and in disposable containers. The staff on duty will help them. (**PLEASE NOTE: BCMS does not allow any peanut products.** We have children at BCMS with severe allergies!) Keep in mind that BCMS also serves a morning snack after 9:00 a.m. every day.

- **Can I drop in at any time during school operation hours?**

Yes. But please keep in mind that if your child is still adjusting, we suggest **only one separation a day**. You are welcome to e-mail or call the school office to ask for information about how your child is doing, at any time.

- **Can I hang out and talk to other parents?**

Yes. But please be mindful about the programs still in session. The best places to converse are the lobby, the front hall (antechamber), or the back hall by the cubbies *before* you come into the front playroom. If your child is with you, you may want to sit down in the front room and get your child involved in an activity and enjoy each other's company. But, please remember that the teachers are no longer in charge of your child once you have arrived and your child has acknowledged you. We depend on *your* partnership and support, to teach, model, and reinforce Montessori ideals (as well as keep all the children in our program safe and learning) while you are in our building.

When you pick up your child from our program please remember the program is still in session and your child is still in school (*and must still follow the rules*) until they leave our building. As soon as your child sees you, we have lost authority over your child. You are now in charge. They look to you for guidance and correction. The teachers and assistants are busy watching and teaching the children who are still in session, and they **rely on you to enforce the safety and social rules of the school**. Your child may test you to see if you know the rules or may even act out to see what you will or will not do. This is why we need to work together, with parents as teaching partners, to maintain the order, consistency and integrity of the program while you are here.

- **Can I go in the classroom or playground when it is in session?**

No. This disturbs the serenity, structure, and safety of the children's environment and distracts the children and teacher from their lessons. If you feel you need to give a message to the teacher, or need help dropping off your child, please come to the office and let one of the directors help you. **Always stop at the classroom or playground door and let the teacher bring your child to you.**

- **Can I go in the classroom or playground when it is *NOT* in session?**

No. At the end of each session the classrooms and playground are cleaned, prepared, and made ready for the next school day. **We kindly ask you do not disturb the prepared environment.** If you are looking for a lost item, etc. it is best to go to the office and ask for assistance in locating it.

- **Can I participate at BCMS?**

Yes. We will gladly accept any parent's wish to volunteer when we ask for help with special events, or if there is a subject you would like to present to your child's class. **Please see the director to discuss ways you can participate.** (PLEASE NOTE: We do not *require* parent participation hours, mandatory volunteering of hours, or fundraising participation.)

BCMS Routine

Signing In and Out

Every child must be “signed in” and “signed out” of school by an authorized adult contact – a parent, relative, caregiver, or family friend. Signing in and out daily is a requirement of our licensing agency, the California Department of Social Services.

To help you to not forget to sign in/out your child each day, you should make it your first priority upon entering the school facility. ***Not doing so will result in a penalty fee of \$5.00 per incident*** (as indicated on your contract). Please do so before going to the cubby or even before retrieving your child. Please also remember that the teachers are no longer in charge of your child once you have arrived and your child has acknowledged you.

At BCMS, we utilize an electronic keypad system for signing the children into and out of school. Every person authorized to drop off or pick up your child from school must be assigned an individual electronic PIN (Personal Identification Number) that is used to sign the child into and out of the system. This PIN is an “electronic signature” and must be unique to each individual person. NEVER give your PIN to anyone else to use. Additionally, never let your child press the buttons on the keypad to check in or out. **The keypad is for adult use only.**

Should you need to add an authorized contact to drop off or pick up your child, **we must receive your authorization in writing and with your signature** (either via hand written note, or via e-mail). When giving your written authorization please list the person's first and last name, relationship to you (i.e. grandparent, family friend, nanny, etc.), and the date and time they will drop off or pick up, and your signature. Please direct your new contact to come to the office. We will ask them for a photo ID (to ensure they are the person you have authorized) and will help them set up a PIN, check in or out, and help them to locate your child. We will never allow anyone who is not authorized by you to take your child from our facility.

No Cell Phone Policy

BCMS is a cell phone free zone. We kindly request that you do not talk on your cell phone (text, check e-mails, browse the web, etc.) once you have entered the school. You are welcome to use your phone to place or receive calls in our front lobby if you need to. This is for the respect and safety of your child, and to maintain the order of the school. Phone calls are distracting and require concentration. Your child is separating from you, or has not seen you all day. Your child desires and needs your *full* attention when they are being dropped off, and especially when they are being picked up. In addition, we need to feel comfortable sharing about your child's day with you.

The Basic Daily Routine

BCMS opens for morning childcare at 7:00 a.m. Classes are staggered beginning at 9:00 a.m. and all classes end at 3:00 p.m. Lunch is served between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Children eat family-style with their class in the dining area. Nap time is from noon to 3:00 p.m. Children who nap generally nap after their class lunch. Afternoon childcare begins at 3:00 p.m. and the school closes at 6 p.m. We dim the lights at 5:45 p.m. to alert parents who may be in the front room with their children that it is time to start cleaning up.

For the first two weeks of your child's attendance at BCMS, our head teachers will leave an informational chart on the office door about your child's day (how they ate, how long they slept, and how their day was, in brief.) This will help both you and us to see a pattern of how your child is adjusting to school.

Morning Routine

Between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. we have morning childcare. After 8:30 a.m., the children are on the playground (weather permitting). Miss Evelyn's class starts at 9:00 a.m., Mr. Sanath's class starts at 9:15 a.m. and Miss Soumya's class starts at 9:30 a.m. **Please bring your child to school on time.** If you are running late, gently hand off your child to a teacher at the door and let them bring him/her into the classroom. This is so as not to interrupt the children's environment and the teacher's lessons.

It's nice to drop your child off at least fifteen minutes before class starts. Children often enjoy playing for a little while, and getting some energy out, before they go to class.

ALWAYS drop your child off in a supervised area. That is to say, either in the playroom or on the playground - where teachers are present. **NEVER leave your child unattended/where there are no adults present,** especially in the front room - BCMS has no teachers assigned to this room in the morning to observe your child and keep them safe.

The first few days are difficult for both parents and children. Tears may occur, but our dedicated staff will welcome your child and help with this difficult time. Some children may cry at drop off. But, for your reassurance, this is almost always short lived and truthfully is only a display for your benefit - it is your child's way of telling you they love you, this is hard for them, and they still need you. Having said all this, **the sooner you go the sooner your child will settle in and trust us.** The longer you stay and try to settle your child in, the more upset they will become when you finally leave. Remember - never sneak out. This will upset a child and teaches your child not to trust adults.

It is common for children who never cried when being dropped off at daycare, etc. to start for the first time when they begin at BCMS. We want to reassure you this is completely normal and is part of separation anxiety. Your child is going to another stage of awareness that you are dropping them off and going. Once again, the quick goodbye shows your child you are not concerned at all and you know your child is safe and will have a wonderful day.

At BCMS our parents volunteer to be part of a program called “buddy parents”. This program was put in place to support our new families during transitioning into BCMS. Please contact the office, bigcityschool@gmail.com, **if you would like to request to be paired with a buddy parent.** It was not too long ago when they first started and our parents are more than happy to talk with you and help reassure you that everything is going to be OK and your child is truly in good hands while you are away.

Food - Snacks and Lunch

BCMS provides a nutritious “home cooked” lunch and three healthy snacks a day. Every month our staff designs a different lunch and snack menu which consists of wholesome foods that still appeal to the children. We provide a different lunch each day of the week, rotating through the month. We change out our menu from month to month. **The majority of our menu items are prepared fresh daily in our own kitchen.** For your convenience, each month you will be e-mailed a copy of the current month’s lunch menu in a .pdf format. You can also find the monthly menu printed and posted in the front lobby and inside the school under the clock in the front room.

Should you need to reference the monthly lunch menu you can find it on our website “Resources” page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/resources/>

BCMS has six cases of farm fresh fruit delivered from Quality Fresh Produce each week, and our 2 % milk comes from Sun Valley Dairy and is hormone-free. Some of the children at BCMS have severe food allergies. We request that parents do not bring in food from home, unless there is a special arrangement with the office. (**PLEASE NOTE: BCMS does not allow any peanut products.** We have children at BCMS with severe allergies!) Be sure to let us know if your child has any dietary restrictions and we will work with you to ensure your child has healthy meals at school.

Snack is served in the morning and mid-day and during the after school program. Fresh fruit is always served for the mid-day snack.

Nap Time

Naps are not mandatory at BCMS, as we will never force a child to go to sleep. Our nap time starts at around 12:00 p.m. and ends around 3:00 p.m. **Most children take a nap right after their class eats lunch** - in our quiet, darkened nap room. Each child has a cot, pillow, and blanket assigned to them for the entire time they nap here at BCMS. Older children, who are growing out of a formal nap, may transition to rest in a quiet area of the classroom with a cushioned mat, pillow, and blanket. A child can request to take a nap if they feel they need one, at any time. BCMS will never make a child nap. The teachers may ask for your assistance if your child is having difficulty and will not nap for them.

After School Program

The BCMS after school program follows the same principles of the Montessori class time: Respect for each other, for self, and for the environment. The program starts at 3pm and ends at 6:00 p.m. It is run by our Co-Director, Miss Hilma, and supported by our lead teachers who follow your child in each activity during the program. **It offers enriched, age-appropriate activities for all children.** This is an opportunity for open-ended activities such as thematic and dramatic play. They also have another opportunity to play outside (weather permitting) and are served an afternoon snack.

The program offers specialized half-hour enrichment classes every day of the week, including:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Monday & Tuesday: | Spanish |
| Wednesday: | Music |
| Thursday: | Dance (Soccer is also available on the play yard, seasonally) |
| Friday: | Teacher's Choice Activity |

After Hours Emergency Care

BCMS closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. The teachers have worked a long day and are ready to go home. We understand there may be situations beyond your control that might keep you from picking up your child on time. BCMS does provide emergency care under these circumstances. We charge by the minute and have no grace period. **Emergency care is provided at a rate of \$2.00 per minute.** Please call us to alert us to your need for emergency care. One of the teachers will stay behind for you, so please pay the teacher directly, in cash, when you arrive (or the next day if you do not have cash payment with you).

Special Events

On-site Field Trips

BCMS has on-site field trips only. Instead of children going to the zoo, BCMS brings the zoo to the school! Field trips range from fantastic reptiles with The Lizzard Lady, beautiful birds with Happy Birds, Shadow Puppets, and Insect Discovery - just to name a few. **The children learn and have a great deal of fun.**

We also have parents who volunteer to give interesting presentations to the children. Police officers, robot designers, scientists, and firemen are some of the parents who have joined us in the past. We have also had parents share special cultural events with the children by giving a presentation about subjects such as Chinese New Year, Hannukah, Loy Krathlong (The Thai Festival of Lights), Bastille Day, Cinco de Mayo, Japanese Children's Day, and many more! We welcome this enrichment to our school. If there is a subject you would like to present to your child's class, please talk with the director to discuss ways you can participate.

Birthdays at BCMS

At BCMS we do not allow any "food parties" which means, no cookies/cupcakes/juice boxes/sweets during the school day. While it's important to us to acknowledge and celebrate your child and their special day, it's also important to us to do that in a really meaningful way, which also allows for us to respect students and families who have specific dietary restrictions, preferences, and also to reinforce healthier eating habits in general. (We have 100 children at the school, which means 100 birthdays to celebrate throughout the school year!)

That being said, we have **two ways we celebrate** birthdays at BCMS:

On **your child's actual birthday**, we do a special "**Montessori**" **birthday ceremony** to appreciate and celebrate your child for the wonderful and unique human being that they are. We do the ceremony during the morning circle time. Part of the ceremony involves showing their classmates pictures of themselves to see how they have grown and changed over the years. Also, each child receives a "birthday button" that acknowledges to the rest of the school it's their special day.

Before your child's birthday, we will request that you bring in photo prints of your child when they were a newborn/baby, at age 1 yr old, 2 yr old, 3 yr old, 4 yr old, etc. They can be any size/format. Please bring the prints no later than the day before your child's actual birthday. (Note: Any child's birthday that falls on the weekend will have a ceremony on the prior Friday, or the following Monday.) You can give the prints directly to your child's teacher, or to the office staff. We will make sure they are returned to you promptly.

We also take pictures of the ceremony, and post them on our password protected BCMS Shutterfly site and include them in the weekly classroom e-mail so you can see your child's special ceremony.

The other way we celebrate is by doing a **joint monthly birthday celebration** on the **third Friday of each month** (early closure Friday). All the children who have a birthday that month make "birthday crowns" to wear and BCMS provides a birthday cake. A small slice is given to all the children in the class on that one day, and they sing the "Happy Birthday Song" to that month's celebrants.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding birthdays at BCMS, and we look forward to acknowledging your child's special day!

Parents as Partners

Working Together for Success

Communication

At BCMS, communication between school and home is absolutely key for your child's success in our program. We can confidently say that you will receive more detailed information from us about your child during their time with us than you will ever receive in any other school program your child will attend. This is simply because, while in our care, your child will be rapidly going through a great deal of developmental stages and we will be working together with you to lay the foundation of education and social/emotional skills for your child. With the trusting, and open relationship between BCMS and home we will work together to teach your child what is expected of them and how to make good choices. Your child will learn to respect and trust our staff who will keep your child safe, secure, and therefore able to thrive and learn.

At BCMS we have two amazing and very supportive ladies in the office, Jill Walsh and Emma Davenport, whose job it is to act as BCMS liaisons between the parents/guardians and the staff and to keep information flowing between school and home, and home and school. They are happy to assist you at any time.

There are several ways to communicate with us in the office:

- Via e-mail at: bigcityschool@gmail.com
- Via phone: 415.648.5777
- Stopping by the office to talk after drop off, or before pick up.
- If no one is in the office when you stop by, write us a note on the clip board in the office.

Notes/Incident Reports

At BCMS one of the ways we communicate with you about incidents during your child's day is via notes. We will type a note and post it in an envelope, with your child's last name, over the key pad for you to retrieve at the end of the day. Notes are intended for parent's eyes only. The note is supposed to represent you having a "crystal ball" - knowing everything that happens at school, even though you are not here. You will know if your child has been making good choices at school, was someone using bad language today?, how their interactions with teachers and/or classmates were, etc.

When a child gets hurt at school (falls down, scrapes a knee, has a cut) we will communicate this with a note as well. We want you to know when and how it happened. If it is a serious injury, we will call you at your provided contact numbers and inform you of the situation / ask you to come and pick up your child. If it is an emergency, we will call you and 911.

Notes are generally short and will have only the basic facts: time of incident, place of incident, which teacher reported the incident, what happened, who was involved, and how it was dealt with here at school. All this information is to keep you informed and give you an idea of what your child was involved in. Notes are intended only for the parents/guardians to read, so if an

authorized contact other than the parent or guardian picks up (i.e. grandparent, family friend, nanny, etc.), we will e-mail the note to you (the parent/guardian) to ensure that you receive it.

Many parents are surprised, and perhaps even a little mortified, when they receive a note informing them of misbehavior at school. However, at BCMS **we look upon behavior notes as a learning opportunity!** Young children are growing, developing, trying new things, imitating classmates, testing, and finding their way in the world. They are no longer babies, - they are much more aware, are being confronted with new challenges, and it is normal (and frankly somewhat expected) that children of this age group will try to test boundaries and of course make mistakes. Our goal is not to make you or your child feel bad about the incident. In our eyes, the child is *never* “bad” in themselves. It is their *behavior* that is undesirable. It is important that we keep you informed of what your child is working on here at school, and our goal is that school and home work together to teach your child where the boundaries are, what is expected, and how to be in the world. This is part of your child’s early childhood education. Notes are merely the vehicle we use to provide you with the basic information of events, and look for patterns of behaviors that are not being resolved, so we may teach your child together.

Sometimes, when all our discipline strategies for your child are losing their effectiveness, you may receive notes for several days, or weeks, in a row. By sharing this information with you we become a united front and *together* we will teach your child to follow the BCMS boundaries and respect our discipline while they are in our care. **Discipline (teaching) is so important for your child, and in fact is necessary for their sense of security, their safety, their self-esteem, and ultimately their future success in life.**

When you receive a note from us, please read it first, put it away and then proceed to pick up your child. Again, we feel it is better *not* to inform your child they have a note. Rather, use the information as if you know all that goes on in your child's life - it's your “crystal ball”.

Please feel free to talk to the office if you have any questions that we may assist you with regarding notes. We are always available to assist you and support you. Miss Amanda or Miss Jill are good resources if you need some parenting or discipline tips, new strategies, or are not sure what to do with the information we have provided to you.

Cooperative Learning - Helping Your Child Succeed

A Montessori education involves cooperation and communication between school and home. Harmony between the two is very important. Parents can build language at home. **Frequent book reading by parents relates strongly to school readiness.** Children whose parents read to them on a regular basis, beginning early in childhood, have a higher likelihood of acquiring age-appropriate language skills.

BCMS children and parents can participate in BookTree, a fee-based, monthly service that delivers a variety of age-appropriate books in a high quality canvas bag - directly to BCMS for you to pick up. For more information, please visit their website at: <http://www.booktree.us/>

Here are a few tips that may help your home be a Montessori home, which fosters independence and self-confidence for your child:

- **Read to your child:** Ask simple questions about the story. Ask the child to retell, pantomime the act or repeat the sequence.
- **Play games with your child:** Talk about the rules that need to be followed and listen to directions.
- **Build an understanding of number concepts:** Practice counting objects. Recognize symbols (1,2,3).
- **Understanding time and space:** Talk to your child about today, tomorrow, yesterday. Use words like: more and less, bigger and smaller, before and after.
- **Develop memory:** Memorize nursery rhymes and short poems. Tell a simple story. Remember correct sequence of events.
- **Help notice details:** Play games that involve picking out differences between objects that are very much alike. Use objects like buttons, money, cards, etc. "Find the ones that are similar and dissimilar."
- **Learn to sort objects by characteristics:** Practice sorting objects by size, color, shape, function or material.
- **Build vocabulary:** Help your child learn the names of objects in your home, in specific rooms, in closets, in drawers. Talk about words and explain what they mean. Play games that describe characteristics to which the child must supply a name: I'm thinking of a long metal object, used in the kitchen, which we use to cut food. What is it?
- **Learn the colors:** Call attention to the colors of objects. Help your child point to colors when you name them and name them when you point to them.
- **Increase his general store of information:** Talk to your child about experiences he has had; an excursion to the park, a movie you watched together, a walk. All can be an opportunity to increase his knowledge about the world he lives in.
- **Help you child use his imagination:** Encourage inventive games that involve pretending: playing house, or store or school; being an imaginary hero - all of these games help develop your child's critical thinking skills.

Discipline at BCMS

BCMS approaches difficult or inappropriate behavior as teaching moments. Children do not misbehave to manipulate or intentionally annoy the adults in their environment.

The discipline methods we use at BCMS are:

- Teacher will verbally address inappropriate behavior.
- Re-direction to another activity or physical space.
- Time out - on the spot (in class, on the bench of the play yard, etc.).
- Time out in the office.
- If all else fails, we may call you at work so you can give your child a little talk.

Many parents are surprised, and perhaps even a little mortified, when they receive a note informing them of misbehavior at school. However, at BCMS **we look upon behavior notes as a learning opportunity!** Young children are growing, developing, trying new things, imitating classmates, testing, and finding their way in the world. They are no longer babies, are much more aware, and it is normal (and frankly somewhat expected) that children of this age group will try to test boundaries and of course make mistakes. Our goal is not to make you or your child feel bad. In our eyes, no child is ever “bad” in themselves. It is their *behavior* that is undesirable. **Our goal is to teach your child - so they will internalize what they have learned through being shown boundaries, correction, and reflection - and ultimately, over time, self-regulate undesirable behavior themselves.**

It is important that we keep you informed of what your child is working on here at school, and that school and home work together to teach your child where the boundaries are, what is expected, and how to be in the world. This is part of your child’s early childhood education. We regularly look to parents for assistance - as you are the biggest influence in your child’s life! Together we can help your child learn to make good choices and to listen to all of us.

Potty Training

One of the most exciting milestones for many parents of preschoolers is when a child transitions out of wearing diapers. But how do you know when your child is ready to start transitioning? There are, of course, many philosophies about how to approach potty training, but we feel that **a child's readiness is probably the most important factor in an efficient, successful and happy potty training process.** At Big City, we are committed to supporting you and your child through this process, and determining a child's readiness is the first step.

If you've started thinking about potty training your child, **please read our “Thinking of saying goodbye to diapers?” letter.** You can find it posted on our website “Resources” page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/resources/>. It has all the information you need to help you assess signs of readiness in your child and how potty training works at home and school.

As always, you are welcome to talk with the director about any questions you may have regarding potty training.

Staying Healthy and Well

Immunization Requirements

The California School Immunization Law requires that children receive a series of immunizations before entry to schools, child care centers, or family child care homes. In addition, the California School Immunization Law requires schools, child care centers, and family child care homes to enforce immunization requirements, to maintain immunization records of all children enrolled, and to submit reports to the health department.

You can find a full listing of CALIFORNIA IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE at: <http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-230.pdf>

Be sure to check with your child's physician to make sure your child's immunizations are up to date - prior to entering school. In addition, **your child's physician will need to fill out and sign form LIC 701 and we must have it in your child's file no later than one week before your child begins school at BCMS.**

Form LIC 701, along with other **required school forms**, can be found on our website "Resources" page at : <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/resources/>

LIC 701 - Physician's Report - only:

http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/LIC701_Physicians-Report.pdf

Immunization Exemptions

The law allows (a) parents/guardians to choose exemptions from immunization requirements based on their personal beliefs, and (b) physicians of children to choose medical exemptions for them. The law does not allow parents/guardians to choose an exemption simply because the "shot" record is lost or incomplete and it is too much trouble to get to a physician or clinic to correct the problem. The back of the blue California School Immunization Record has instructions and **an affidavit to be signed by parents who want a personal beliefs exemption.**

Please inform the BCMS office if you have chosen exemption for your child and need to fill out an affidavit.

BCMS Illness Policies

BCMS is not equipped to provide care for children who are too sick to participate in regularly scheduled activities at school. Therefore, it is very important for you to make back up arrangements for substitute care in the event your child is/or becomes ill. The following criteria are outlined to assist you in deciding when not to bring your child to school because of illness.

Your child may not come to school if he/she:

- Has or had a fever *24 hours prior to attending the school; (*For example, if your child had last dose of medication at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday and their final fever breaks that evening at 5:00 p.m., they should not return to school until Friday morning. 24 hours would have been at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday evening.)
- Has vomited during the 24 hours preceding attendance at the school.
- Has diarrhea during the 24 hours preceding attendance at the school.
- Has skin sores which are open and draining (including such things as impetigo, etc.). Your child may return to school when the drainage ceases, the sores begin to heal, or your physician clears your child to return to school.
- Has ear/eye drainage such as pink eye (conjunctivitis). Your child may return to school after prescription medication has been administered for 24 hours.
- Has Streptococcal Group A throat infection. Your child may return to school after prescription medication has been administered for 24 hours.
- Has a contagious disease, such as Chicken Pox (until the child is cleared by a doctor/is no longer contagious/until the lesions are crusted over).
- Has lice, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated and contagious to others.
- Has undiagnosed rash or a rash attributable to contagious illness or condition.
- Has significant respiratory problems.
- In some cases, a note from your child's physician may be required.

When doubtful about your child's health condition, play it safe for the sake of your child, other children, and the staff at BCMS - keep them home. Especially keep your child home for 48 hours in the case of a severe cold, upper respiratory infection, or if your child has an infectious disease.

Any child who becomes ill while at school will be quarantined in the school office, until a parent/authorized adult arrives to pick up the child. The administrative staff will notify you and ask you to pick up your child immediately if your child:

- Has a fever of 100F or higher.
- Vomits during the day.
- Is fussy, lethargic, or constantly crying for an unusual amount of time/for unexplained reasons.
- Has two diarrhea episodes in the same day.
- Has any contagious drainage or weeping sores, which includes suspicion of such things as chicken pox, impetigo, pink eye, or ear drainage.
- Unknown rash, severe sore throat, severe cough, unexplained pain.

- Children who are too sick to participate in regularly scheduled activities at school and require more care than the program staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children

We strongly encourage you NOT to bring your child(ren) who are ill, and seem symptom free, due to use of over the counter medication (such as Children's Tylenol, Motrin and cold & cough syrup, etc.). These over the counter medications typically only mask the symptoms for short periods of time rather than cure the illness, and we end up having to call you to pick up your child in any case.

When your child is sick, be sure to call in or e-mail the office to let the Administrative Staff know that your child is out sick and what symptoms they may be having. We try to keep track of what illnesses are going around in our school, so we can keep everyone informed. Your help with this is greatly appreciated.

Make sure to follow the policies we have listed above and any future updates – our goal is to keep everyone as healthy as possible. We appreciate everyone's help in stopping the spread of illnesses in our school!

Our illness/sick policy is always available for your reference via our website at:

http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/BCMS-Illness_Sick-Policy.pdf

Medicine at School

BCMS will only give prescription medication to your child. We require the original bottle with the pharmacy label. **You must fill out our medication form:**

<http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Medication-Form.pdf> and complete it with your signature to give us permission to administer the medication. Without this form filled out correctly, we cannot administer any medication. Please give the completed form and medication bottle to the office staff when you drop off your child. If your child needs medication on a regular basis, please indicate this on your school forms and inform the director.

Parent Support

We welcome you to drop by, call, or e-mail the office at any time - to communicate with us, ask questions, pick up parenting tips, or share details or insights about your child with us. The director will set up private meetings for parents who want more than a quick chat. **We support you 100% and are ready, willing and able to support you whenever needed/requested.** We also have many options in place that are available to support you:

Parent/Teacher Conferences

In Montessori education, there are no “report cards” – grading, judgment, or categorization of a child’s progress. Each child is exposed to a multitude of subjects and experiences and is allowed to progress at their own pace, and build a love of learning by exploring and absorbing whatever they are interested in at the time. Their interests and fascinations can change from moment to moment, and day to day. Each child progresses at their own pace and all children are therefore always age appropriate in their own personal progress. There is no right or wrong in their personal journey/progress.

Please be assured that if there is *ever* a concern about your child, their progress, or any issue, we will contact you immediately to meet and discuss our concern so we can work together to support your child.

BCMS has an open-door policy and does not pre-set dates for parent/teacher conferences. **Parent/teacher conferences can be scheduled, upon request by either parent or teacher, at any time.** Parents can briefly chat with their Head Teacher before class starts, or just after class ends. Parents are also welcome, at any time, to approach the directors with concerns or questions.

We respectfully request that you do not approach any of the assistant teachers for information regarding your child. Firstly, this will distract them from the important work of monitoring the children and program in session, and keeping the children safe. Secondly, they may not have the information you are seeking. It is best to go to the directors, your head teacher, or request information through the office. They will be able to obtain the information in the most rapid and efficient manner, and are committed to providing you with answers to your questions from the right sources.

If you would like to schedule a conference with your child’s teacher, at any time, please send an e-mail request to: bigcityschool@gmail.com or stop by the office to schedule one. We will do everything possible to accommodate your scheduling needs.

Buddy Parents

At BCMS our parents volunteer to be part of a program called “buddy parents”. This program was put in place to **support our new families during transitioning to BCMS**. Please contact the office, bigcityschool@gmail.com if you would like to request to be paired with a buddy parent. It was not too long ago when they first started and our parents are more than happy to talk with you, make play dates with you, and help reassure you that everything is going to be OK and your child is truly in good hands while you are away.

BCMS Yahoo! Group

The BCMS Yahoo Group is only open to parents of Big City Montessori School, and you are welcome to join while you are part of the school. **Big City’s Yahoo group is a wonderful way to connect with other parents and to share and receive information that might be of interest to our community.** Postings include such topics as school closure date notices, carpooling, play dates, share cares, looking for a nanny, recommendations for parks, kid activities, kid friendly restaurants, and much, much more.

All e-mail addresses are kept confidential. We respectfully request that the BCMS Yahoo group be used for school-related or family-related postings only. **Please do not use it for soliciting of any kind.**

If you would like to join the BCMS yahoo group, please send an e-mail request to bigcityschool@gmail.com, ATTN: Miss Emma. Be sure to give us the e-mail address you would like to use for the group. You will be e-mailed an invitation to join, and can follow the steps in the invitation to activate your membership in the group.

Week in Review E-Mails

At BCMS we love to share by inviting you into your child's classroom via what we call a *Week in Review* e-mail. Children in this age group are often not able to verbalize to you all that they are doing and learning each week. The *Week in Review* e-mail is sent to you every Friday. It features brief descriptions of some of the subjects the head teacher has presented in the morning circle - plus, we add pictures to help illustrate the lesson, and for you to see your child in class and what/how they are learning! As the day progresses from morning circle to independent work time, playground time, lunch time, etc. we continue taking pictures that demonstrate all the interesting work they are choosing/what they are enjoying, and include these in the e-mail as well. There will also be weekly/monthly reminders, a list of reported illnesses for the week (so you know what’s “going around”), a Montessori quote, and an interesting tip for parents.

This is a wonderful window into your child’s world, and a great tool for you to prompt conversation with them about their experiences here at BCMS. Many parents inform us that they have very happy grandparents (who sometimes live half way around the world!) that they are able to forward the e-mail on to, to share the e-mail with! The *Week in Review* e-mails travel all over the world. How amazing is that?!

BCMS Shutterfly Site

At BCMS we love to provide our parents with every opportunity to see and keep mementos of the events your child partakes in. One way we do this is by taking 100's of pictures every school year and posting them on our password protected and secure Shutterfly site. **On the BCMS Shutterfly site you will find pictures of your child's classmates, birthday ceremonies, field trips, and special events.** We don't want you to miss a thing! Each time we have posted new pictures for you to enjoy, we will send an e-mail announcement along with the password to access the site. This password is changed at times to keep it safe and exclusive to our families.

BCMS Parent Seminars

We provide several free parent workshops per year to help provide tools for parenting, parent support, and information of interest to our parent community. Some examples of the seminars we offer: New Parent Orientation, Discipline Tools Seminar, Parents for Public Schools Seminar (to help you navigate the SF public school system when the time comes, etc.)

Big City Parents Organization (BCPO)

The BCPO is an all parent volunteer organization. **The group plans the fabulous annual Scholarship Gala event for the BCMS community, which is the one and only means of fundraising by the BCPO.** The event features gourmet food and wine, live entertainment, a silent and live auction, and is the single, annual opportunity for parents to socialize on their own. 100% of funds raised from this adult-only event are used for scholarships to provide tuition assistance for five children to attend BCMS.

For more information about the BCPO, the annual Scholarship Gala, and ways you can get involved, please visit our website "BCPO" page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/bcpo/>

Our Community

Looking for a Plumber, Painter, Caterer, Home Organizer, Pizza Joint?

To help support our community, we have a list of BCMS parent-owned businesses on our web site. If you would like to be added to the list, we welcome additions! Please stop by, or e-mail the the BCMS office and we will be happy to add you on.

For a full listing of BCMS parent-owned businesses, please visit our website "Our Community" page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/our-community/>

Business Together

BCMS Contract Policies

Leave of Absence/Vacation

For parents who may want to travel or leave the country with their children, **BCMS does not offer vacation credit**. Whether you are here or not, your space is reserved and being held for you and we still need to pay our staff and rent. Please see the director if you feel you need more information on this.

Disaster Preparedness

We want to reassure you that BCMS is prepared for an emergency in many ways.

- **Fire:**

The SFFD comes once a month to test our fire alarm and conduct a fire drill. We sound the alarm and all children and staff are timed to see how long it takes the entire population to exit the building. Depending on where population is located, we exit either through the back door to the playground, or the front entrance to the lobby. Our record exit time is 36 seconds! (Our longest time is 1 minute 10 seconds). We have smoke detectors in every room and fire extinguishers in the kitchen, front hall, and play room.

In the event of an emergency, such as a fire, that would require us to exit the building, our plan of action is to take the children to a central location. The central location is **Lowes at 491 Bayshore Boulevard, San Francisco - [\(415\) 486-8611](tel:4154868611)**, just one block away (back entrance on Loomis St.). Our Director, Miss Amanda, Co-Director, Miss Hilma and all other care staff are first aid and CPR certified every two years. Additionally, one of our care staff, Miss Karen, is a former registered nurse.

- **Earthquake:**

Our building is built on bedrock, we have safety glass in all our windows, and light fixtures are secured to beams. Due to the nature of our preschool setting (materials are on low shelves/tables) the risk of things falling from a high level is much lower than most. In the rare event we would need to keep the children here (for example, overnight), we couldn't be better prepared. We have cots, mats, blankets, and pillows, lots of bottled water, food and activities to keep the children busy. Not to mention a caring staff that your child is familiar with. If communications are down (phone, cell, internet) we would keep the children safe here with us until you are able to arrive.

School Holidays/Closings

BCMS is a year-round school. BCMS holidays and other closure dates are listed on the back of your enrollment application. We will also remind you in the monthly newsletter, the *Week in Review* e-mail, and through postings around the school. **All closure dates are not counted in the days of school you are paying for.**

Should you need to reference the school closure dates calendar you can find it posted on our

website “Resources” page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/resources/>

Third Friday - Early Closure:

Every third Friday of the month, BCMS closes at 3:00 p.m. for a staff meeting—(unless the third Friday falls on a Holiday or a school closure date.) Please refer to the school year calendar for specific dates. There will be no childcare available after 3:00 PM on these days. Late pick up, after 3:00 PM, will be charged at \$2.00 per minute.

Should you need to reference the school closure dates calendar you can find it posted on our website “Resources” page at: <http://bigcitymontessorischool.com/resources/>

Sibling Discount:

We offer a 5% discount for two children, from the same family, concurrently enrolled at BCMS. A 10% discount for three children, from the same family, concurrent.

Terms of Payment:

- **TERM OF CONTRACT:** By enrolling your child at BCMS, and signing the enrollment contract, you are agreeing to the start and end date listed on the contract. You are also agreeing to pay the full tuition amount listed on the front of the contract. If you enroll your child after the regular 12 month school year begins, you agree to pay the calculated prorated tuition amount listed on the front of the contract.
- **NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE:** If your child has never been enrolled at BCMS, or is returning to BCMS after a break of six (6) months or more, a registration fee is due with the contract. This fee does not apply towards tuition payment. **This fee is non-refundable under any circumstances.**
- **NON-REFUNDABLE TUITION DEPOSIT:** Also due with your contract is a tuition deposit, which reserves your child’s space for the length of the contract. Upon receipt, the tuition deposit is immediately applied and subtracted from the total contracted tuition amount due. ***However, the tuition deposit will only apply as paid tuition if your child attends BCMS for the entire length of the signed contract. This deposit is non-refundable under any circumstances.** *(See early withdrawal penalty section below.)
- **TUITION BALANCE:** Once the tuition deposit is subtracted from the total contracted tuition amount due, the balance of the contracted tuition is amortized and payable in equal monthly installments (based on the number of months included in the contract). The first installment is payable on the child’s first day of school. Subsequent installments are payable thereafter on the first of the month. **We do not send out monthly invoices.** (Please note: tuition rates are set two years in advance. Due to unforeseen circumstances, BCMS reserves the right to increase tuition to reflect the increases in the cost of doing business in San Francisco and California.)

Re-Enrollment:

Every year in March, BCMS re-enrolls current students for the following school year. A re-enrollment contract and non-refundable tuition deposit are required at that time to hold your child's space for the following school year.

Termination:

BCMS reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of any child, at any time, for any reason. Termination will be effective, at BCMS's discretion, no earlier than one day after BCMS gives written or oral notice to you. If BCMS chooses to exercise its right to terminate your child's enrollment, BCMS will prorate the tuition balance through the last day of attendance. However, **the registration fee and tuition deposit will not be refunded. The tuition deposit is forfeited, and will not count towards tuition when your child's enrollment ends prior to the completion of the entire length of the signed contract.**

Early Withdrawal/Required Notice:

You must give BCMS **SIXTY (60) DAYS WRITTEN NOTICE** to withdraw your child before the end date listed on the front of the contract. Whether your child attends school those 60 days or not, **you will be financially responsible for tuition payment through 60 days from the date your written notice is received at BCMS.**

Closure of your account will be prorated based on the number of school days from the first date of the contract through sixty days after receipt of your written notice. The office will calculate your close out balance and inform you of the amount then due and owing. Due to the early withdrawal penalty (please see below), your tuition deposit is forfeited and will not be counted as paid tuition when closing your account.

Early Withdrawal Penalty:

The registration fee and the tuition deposit will not be refunded under any circumstances. The tuition deposit is forfeited, and will not count as paid tuition when your child's enrollment ends prior to the completion of the entire length of the signed contract.

Late Payments:

Tuition is due to BCMS for the current month on the first of the month. We give a five (5) day grace period. **Any outstanding balance not paid FIVE (5) days after the due date is subject to a late payment charge of \$25.00.** If you have not made payment arrangements acceptable to BCMS by the 25th day of the month, after the tuition was due, BCMS will terminate your child's enrollment. You will still be responsible for any tuition then due and owing.

In Closing

This handbook was written to give you all of the information that you need to help guide you and your child in your journey here at BCMS. Once again, welcome to the BCMS family. We look forward to having you and your child learn and grow with us!

Yours in Education,

Amanda Riccetti
Director