

# BMA FAMILY HANDBOOK

## Brownsville Montessori Academy



# 2020-2021

*Director: Claudia Uribe*

**Office Hours: Monday- Friday from 7:30-4:00pm**

**School hours: from 8:15-3:00pm**

**Extended Care 3:00pm-5:30pm**

## **-Covid 19 BMA Prevention Plan:**

- When students arrive, they will need to be checked in and temperature will be documented (touchless) on a new platform application we acquired. (please download brightwheel).
- NO student under NO circumstances will be admitted with a fever (100.4 or above), cough, flu, trouble breathing or any COVID-19 symptom.
- If anyone is sick at home, students should not attend school.
- Please notify the office.
- Tables/desks will be separated from each other. (one table – one child) 6 feet apart.
- Naps will be done on a labeled cot with their own sleeping bag. 6 feet apart- head to toe layout.
- Students, Staff and Parents MUST wear a mask at all times. Staff will help the students get used to them. Students under 2 years of age are not required.
- Students will not be admitted after 9:15 am. We need to limit parent-staff interactions.
- We would like to follow social distancing requirements; limit any socializing and not necessary visits to school. PLEASE CALL if you have any concerns.
- Yoga, PE, Zumba, Art, Spanish or any other extra curriculum class will be done in small classroom groups.
- Students are required to use house slippers or soft shoes in class. Slippers will stay at school. Please send them in a plastic shoe box.
- Outside walking shoes will not be worn in class.
- We are planning to have free time. The fresh air will help the kids. They will be wearing face masks and hand washing has always been mandatory at our school.
- For this school year (mandatory) each student will need to bring their own personal hand sanitizer (these are to be placed on their tables), house slippers and 3 Clorox/Lysol wipes bottles per student. I recommend you start buying these, before they run out. Other schools will be requiring these as well. These items are to be left at the office with their name on it. (BMA will refill hand sanitizer bottles)
- The last week of July BMA will be professionally sanitized and ready to start our school year.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#SocialDistancing>

## Frequently Asked Questions

**How does BMA make decisions regarding coronavirus?** We're working closely with the CDC, state and local health departments to respond as quickly as possible to the latest guidance and

**Am I at risk for coronavirus?** This is a rapidly evolving situation and the CDC risk assessment may change daily. The latest updates are available on CDC's website.

**What is the criteria for BMA closing?** We continue to follow the guidance of the local health department. Any decision to close would be made in partnership with local health departments. We'll be sure to communicate with you quickly, so you are informed about all actions we take. (via BRIGHTWHEEL)

**How would we be notified about closures and reopening?** We will communicate with you via email, text or through brightwheel, as well as social media posts.

**Do I get charged tuition if I don't bring my child to school due coronavirus?** YES, in the event of a prolonged closure (longer than 4 weeks), BMA will determine an agreeable tuition amount to cover overhead costs. We are committed on taking care of our teachers should we need to close.

**How are you keeping children safe and healthy at BMA?** We are closely monitoring the latest updates from the **CDC** and we're following their guidance on the most up-to-date recommendations. We at BMA, we're practicing the following actions:

- Diligently following our hygiene and cleaning procedures, including disinfecting surfaces like door handles and sanitizing more frequently.
- While our teachers will do their best to meet you at the gate for pick-up and drop-off, we're asking for your help to keep your visit as brief as possible and be careful not to touch too many surfaces.
- Wear a mask and continuing to emphasize the importance of hand washing that is aligned with the **CDC** recommended 20-second hand washing techniques and reinforcing this action with children multiple times throughout the day.
- Asking for your partnership to help us keep our school free of illness. If your child has had a fever or trouble breathing, we ask that they stay home until they have been symptom-free for at least 7 consecutive days.

**To ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our community, we're being vigilant about enforcing our existing policy of excluding sick children and employees. While we realize this may be a burden, staying home when sick is one of the best ways to keep illness from spreading.**

**How does coronavirus affect children?** The CDC has the most up to date and reliable information on coronavirus's impact on children.

**What if a child or teacher shows symptoms associated with coronavirus while they are in class?** If a child or teacher begins to show symptoms of coronavirus or any other illness, we'll follow our exclusion for illness policy (the exclusion period is 14 consecutive days) . In that case, the child or teacher would be asked to return home, see a doctor and partner with the local health department to obtain a recommendation on how to proceed. We'll continue to be diligent about enforcing our existing policy of excluding sick children and employees. When they return to school, they will need a clearance letter from the doctor. While we understand the additional burden this may cause, staying home when sick is one of the best ways to stop illness from spreading.

**What can I do with my child to help prevent transmission?** We see our school as safe and clean environment for children to learn and grow, and we need your partnership. If your child is symptomatic, we ask that they stay home until they've been symptom free without medication for at least 7 consecutive days. If you choose to keep your child at home, please call the office and let us know.

**Is BMA doing what's necessary to procure the necessary cleaning supplies? Yes, and we are also accepting cleaning supplies as donations.**

**Are you hiring a professional vendor to clean the school? Are you going to do a deep clean?**

Yes, we will diligently be cleaning and disinfecting the school throughout the day, as well as regularly practicing the handwashing. Our professional cleaners will maintain their visits regularly. These are the most effective methods outlined by the CDC in the prevention of spreading illness. We're working closely with local health departments to determine if and when a deep clean is recommended. In the event an individual has confirmed direct exposure to a confirmed case, is being tested for or has been confirmed having coronavirus, we would ensure a deep clean takes place prior to the return of any employee or student.

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Philosophy**

The Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom; a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. The world of the child is full of sights and sounds, which at first appear chaotic. From this chaos children must create order, learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail their senses, and slowly but surely gain mastery of themselves and their environment.

Dr. Montessori developed what she called the *prepared environment*, which already possess a certain order and allows the children to learn at their own speed, according to their capacities and in a non-competitive atmosphere. "Never let children risk failure until they have a reasonable chance of success."

During the years before the age of six, children learn the rules of human behavior most easily. These years can be constructively devoted to "civilizing" children, freeing them through the acquisition of good manners and habits to take their places in their culture.

Dr. Montessori recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, and offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns, who is motivated through work itself to persist in a given task. If Montessori children are free to learn, it is because they have acquired an inner discipline from their exposure to both physical and mental order. This awareness is the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy. Montessori teaches children to observe, to think, and to judge. It introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which intellectual and social discipline goes hand in hand.

### **Mission Statement**

Brownsville Montessori Academy is committed to maintaining the highest standards of Montessori education. Our mission as educators is to foster independent, confident, academically prepared, and socially responsible citizens, who will be lifelong learners and problem solvers. We will grow and evolve to meet the needs of our students, parents, and our community.

### **Vision Statement**

During the next five years, Brownsville Montessori Academy will strive to be a model Montessori school that embraces a diverse community that respects, inspires, and fulfills the potential of all our students. To this end, students will experience mixed age classrooms with freedom of movement and choice of activity in an uninterrupted three hour instructional block that promotes a "discovery" model and supports learning of concepts through the guidance of a trained Montessori teacher and the use of specialized materials.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The main objective of the Brownsville Montessori Academy is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment that helps children develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for our school are:

- To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- To develop a sense of high self-esteem.
- To build habits of concentration for lifelong study.
- To develop and foster an abiding curiosity.
- To develop habits of initiative and persistence.
- To foster inner discipline and a sense of order.
- To develop sensory motor skills to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge.

## II. ADMINISTRATION

*Parents please review this year's handbook. If you have any questions or concerns about the policies and procedures of our school's operation, please feel free to contact the director. If there are any changes to be made, we will notify parents via email.*

### **Admission**

Brownsville Montessori Academy is organized as UriMar Montessori Limited Liability Corporation that is governed by Claudia Uribe. The Director is responsible for the administration of the school. The Brownsville Montessori Academy admits students without discrimination based on race, color, or national and ethnic origin.

Parents interested in enrolling their child(ren) will be given a tour of the school, as well as information concerning the school and the academic programs. The Director will dialogue with the parent about placement. The student may be interviewed by the Director. The intent is to ensure that Brownsville Montessori Academy can adequately meet the needs of the students.

To enroll, the student must have completed the registration packet.

- The registration form completely filled out
- A copy of an up to date immunization record
- Health form completed and signed by physician
- Copy of the Birth Certificate
- Prior school records if applicable
- Payment of the registration fee, school supplies fee and any other student fee

### **Financial Information**

Brownsville Montessori Academy offers half and full day for children in the Toddler and Primary Program. The Montessori curriculum for the Elementary classes must be full day. Tuition is paid in 10 monthly payments or weekly installments. Registration fee of \$300.00, secures your child's placement. BMA has a supply/student fee of \$150.00 due August and January. **All fees are non-refundable.** Tuition payments are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month. A late fee of \$25 will be charged to unpaid balances after 5<sup>th</sup>. Payments after the 10<sup>th</sup> will have a \$5.00 late fee per day. A fee of \$35 will apply to returned checks.

If you decide on a weekly payment, tuition must be paid on the Friday prior to start the following week. After Tuesday, it will be considered as late. A \$10.00 fee will be added to the weekly tuition.

**Extended Care:**

As a service to our parents, Extended Care is available from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Cost for extended care is \$100 a month. Although, we aim to provide a service that aligns with parent work needs, we ask that you promptly pick up your child by 5:30 p.m. A trend of late picks will result in an additional \$25 fee for the month. While we do not encourage last minute extended care, we understand that untimely matters happen. Parents needing extended care due to an unforeseen situation will be charged \$10 for the day. Please contact the office to make necessary arrangements. Afterschool snack is provided by BMA.

### **III. ACADEMIC SERVICES**

**Toddler Program**

The Toddler Program is an enriched environment where the child feels at home in a lovely and orderly setting. We focus on sensor-motor activities, developing large and fine muscle movements. Emphasis is placed on language development so that the child learns the proper names of the things in their environment, using real objects, real life pictures, and audio sounds. Story time and oral language is also essential. The child learns to become normalized in this special environment, learning the manners necessary to move throughout the class and respect others. The program includes practical life, sensorial, language, math, and cultural elements.

**Primary Program**

Dr. Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. S/he must do it by himself or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years s/he spends in the classroom because that person is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love of knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt; therefore, that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

In the Montessori classroom, this objective is approached in two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his or her own choice rather than by force; and second, by helping the child perfect his or her natural tools for learning, so that the child's abilities are maximized for future learning situations. The Montessori materials have this dual, long range purpose in addition to their immediate function of giving specific information to the child.

**Practical Life**

For young children, simple tasks have a special meaning, which an adult considers ordinary like washing dishes, paring vegetables, polishing shoes, etc. These tasks are exciting to children because they allow them to imitate adults. Imitation is one of the strongest urges during the children's early years. In this area of the classroom, children perfect their coordination and become absorbed in an activity. They gradually lengthen their span of concentration. They learn to pay attention to details as they follow a regular sequence of actions. Finally, they learn good working habits as they finish each task and put away all the materials before beginning another activity.

## **Sensorial**

The sensorial materials in the classroom help the children to distinguish, to categorize, and to relate new information to what they already know. Dr. Montessori believed that this process is the beginning of conscious knowledge. It is brought about by the intelligence working in a concentrated way on the impressions given by the senses.

## **Mathematics**

Dr. Montessori demonstrated that if children have access to mathematical equipment in the early years, they can easily and joyfully assimilate many facts and skills of arithmetic. On the other hand, these same facts and skills may require long hours of drudgery and drill if they are introduced to them later in the abstract form. Dr. Montessori designed concrete materials to represent all types of quantities, after she observed that children who become interested in counting like to touch or move the items as they enumerate them. By combining this equipment through separating it, sharing it, counting it, and comparing it, they can demonstrate to themselves the basic operations of mathematics. Children in a Montessori class never sit down to memorize addition and subtraction facts; they never simply memorize multiplication tables. Rather, they learn these facts by actually performing the operations with concrete materials that help create and form a mathematical mind.

## **Language**

In a Montessori classroom, children learn the phonetic sounds of the letters before they learn the alphabetical names in a sequence. The phonetic sounds are given first because these are the sounds they hear in words that they need to be able to read. The children first become aware of these phonetic sounds when the teacher introduces the consonants with each sandpaper letters. The individual presentation of language materials in a Montessori classroom allows the teacher to take advantage of each child's greatest periods of interest.

Reading instruction begins on the day when the children want to know what a word says, or when they show interest in using the sandpaper letters. Writing, or the construction of words with the moveable alphabet, nearly always precedes reading.

The children's interest in reading is never stifled by monotony. Rather, it is cultivated as their most important key to future learning. They are encouraged to explore books for answers to their own questions, whether they are about frogs, rockets, stars or fire engines.

## **Geography**

The large wooden puzzle maps are among the most popular activities in the classroom. At first the children use the maps as puzzles. Gradually, they learn the names of countries as well as information about climate and culture. Children also learn the common land forms such as island and peninsula by making them.

## **History**

Montessori offers the children a concrete presentation of history by letting them work with timelines made from long strips of paper that can be unrolled and stretched along the floor. The line is marked off in segments which represent consecutive periods of history. As an introduction of the idea of history, the children begin by making a timeline of their lives.



## **Sciences**

The children's natural curiosity is stimulated through discovery projects and experiments, helping children draw their own conclusions. The plant and animal kingdoms are studied in an orderly fashion to foster a love and appreciation for all living things.

## **Elementary Program**

The Montessori individualized instruction deals in the concrete. The program permits a variety of approaches, using at every turn, dynamic, and colorful manipulatives, which materialize abstract principles. These beautiful concrete materials are used throughout within the program, including math, reading, grammar, writing, spelling, geography, history, and natural and general science.

## **Language Arts**

Language Arts is an important part of the Montessori Method. Its treatment as a separate subject comes only at the points in which are necessary to give clarity to the child's mind; that is, to give him or her the conscious awareness of language in order that it may be used more effectively. When the child has an understanding that writing is a graphic form of language, attention to spelling, word study, penmanship, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization follows. The real experience in reading and writing comes through the child's work in other areas of the curriculum, such as geography, history, botany, etc.

Because children have different cognitive styles, they are provided with different means for learning to read within the environment. In this way, the child will be able to select the components of reading that fit his or her cognitive style and put them together in the way most suitable for him or her. Once reading is mastered, the child expands into reading quality literature and poetry and into self-expression through creative writing.

## **Mathematics**

Manipulation of concrete and symbolic materials with built in error control develops sound arithmetic skills and leads the child to make his or her own abstractions. As in other parts of the program, experience with material comes first, then the spoken language or naming. This experience is followed by the symbolic representation or written symbol. After the material, its appropriate verbal language, and its symbolic representation are each studied in turn, then associated with one another. This sequence is referred to as quantity, symbol, and association.

## **Geometry**

Geometry is experienced by sensorial through manipulation of both plane and solid geometric figures. These materials induce a creative activity that involves two and three-dimensional construction of various forms. As much geometric nomenclature is supplied as the child is able to assimilate, so that the child has as much information as possible at his or her command when entering the stage of exploring why, how, and when things happen.

## **Social Studies and Science**

Dr. Montessori felt that social studies and science should be integrated in the classroom. Therefore, no clear distinctions are made among the various areas included in this section. The areas are: The Human Relations, Geography, Geology, and History. Subject areas included in these areas include anthropology, astronomy, botany, chemistry, economics, government, philosophy, physics, political behavior, sociology and zoology.

## **Biology**

Biology is structured in such a way as to give the child a means of classification, so that the child can structure and relate the facts of biology. The ultimate goal is an ecological view of life and a feeling of responsibility for the environment. The child will see that each individual life on earth is seemingly selfish, in their fight for survival, but in reality, each serves the good of the whole. Montessori calls this the Cosmic Plan.

## **History**

History follows the development of the solar system, life on earth, the development of humankind, early civilizations, and recorded history. The child sees the long labor of humankind needed to accomplish all that is enjoyed today.

## **Geography**

Geography is designed to show how the physical configurations of the earth contribute to history and is the basis of understanding economic geography, which shows the interdependence of all people.

## **Science**

The science experiments are designed to give the child a basic knowledge, which will make possible the understanding of the development of the solar system, the earth, life on earth, and the needs of plants and animals.

## **Other Academic Services**

### **Art and Music**

The children have the freedom to explore their imaginations in a variety of mediums used for expression. The importance of the process is stressed at this time, not the end product. Music integrates itself into the academics. The musical elements appeal to young children through singing, rhythm and musical instruments.

### **Physical Education/Movement/Yoga**

The importance of physical exercise and the need for children to have the freedom to “move” is important at BMA to instill a love for an active lifestyle. The Physical Education (PE) program emphasizes team work, good sportsmanship, and the spirit of game, rather than competition. Games and activities work on physical development, especially fine and gross motor skills, and building or increasing physical stamina.

The PE program for the Primary children is more about developing gross and fine motor skills through a variety of games and activities. Catching, balancing activities, and simple games of running, tag or relays provide fun exercise for young children. Including movement & yoga. At the Elementary level, they focus is on team work, good sportsmanship, the spirit of game, physical development (both fine and gross motor), and building or increasing physical stamina. Competition is minimized as the students play and learn the fundamentals of a variety of team sports: basketball, soccer, baseball, and others. Team building activities are an important element of the Physical Education program to build community and relationships, as well as increase self-awareness.

## **Spanish**

Spanish is easy and exciting for children to learn. For their first 8 years, children are naturally acquiring language skills. They learn primarily through imitation, repetition, songs and games. Recent brain research has shown that the best time to learn a second language is at a young age because of a child's brain plasticity. During this "sensitive period" children can absorb the language and learn it with the proper accent. Exposure to another language also equips the brain to learn additional languages later in life. If children build a foundation in the Spanish language while they are young and uninhibited, they will carry a fundamental understanding of the culture and language including pronunciation, vocabulary and phrases to take into their future.

## **IV. GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Arrival and Dismissal**

We encourage our student to be independent. We have a drop off -pick up system for follow. Teachers will load, fasten seatbelts and unload your children. Students need to arrive to school by 8:30 a.m. Promptness in a child's life is very important. Students should be picked up by 3:00 p.m. Students will only be released to authorized persons on our list. WE WILL ASK FOR ID'S.

**In case of rain or a very cold day, parents should park and walk their children to their classrooms. We want to keep our students warm and dry!**

### **Release of children**

There is a sign-in and sign-out log for each child coming and going from the class throughout the day. This log includes the name of the child, the date, time of arrival and time of departure. This log is in the entrance.

### **Attendance**

Parents should notify the school when a child will be absent. Please provide medical excuses for extended absences. Communicable diseases should be reported to the school immediately. Teachers maintain attendance and tardiness records on all students.

### **Independence**

"Never do for a child what they can do themselves."

Encourage your child to eat independently and put their things away at home.

### **Local Licensing Office, Hotline and Website**

In take #: 956-316-8275

1060 Mackintosh Dr.

Brownsville, TX 78521

Child Abuse & Neglect: 1-800-252-5400

Website: [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

### **Minimum Standards**

Parents may view the minimum licensing standards at the website: [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

## **Peace Education**

Peace Education is one of the cornerstones of a Montessori Education. Dr. Maria Montessori was twice nominated for the Noble Peace Prize, and her efforts for women's and children's rights are well documented. We are called to help the children learn about one another in order to create a world where everyone can live in peace and understanding.

## **Disciplinary Procedures**

The aim of Brownsville Montessori Academy is to develop each child's self-discipline, reinforced through an ordered environment where each child learns how to be responsible for functioning in and caring for the classroom. Our general rule is: "We respect ourselves, each other and the environment." When a discipline issue arises, teachers will redirect student behavior and use motivational strategies to keep students engaged in instruction. If a student is referred to the office, the teacher will fill out an incident report and send the student to the office. The Director will address the situation with the child and will call the parent if necessary. The teacher will also follow up with a phone call to the parent to inform of the incident in detail. Parent conferences will be scheduled if deemed necessary. Consequences will be given by the teacher with the Director's support.

The staff is consistent in the use of positive discipline measures based on the Montessori Method. Give children positive reminders. Teachers walk up to them and use a gentle voice. "We use a quiet voice in class" or "We use two hands to carry the tray."

## **Problem Identification**

Every effort should be made to identify learning and/or discipline problems early. The director must be advised of all such problems. Meetings with parents will be documented by the teacher. The best interest of the child is our primary consideration in all cases. If a child seriously disrupts a class, takes an inappropriate amount of the teacher's time, or negatively influences other children, it may be necessary to refer the child to another school.

<http://www.helpandhope.org/>

## **Problem Identification Process**

- a) Identify the problem to the director.
- b) Document the child's behavior for at least a week through observations.
- c) Have another observer come into the class and document observations.
- d) Have a parent conference to share concerns and observations.
- e) Agree upon and document a written plan of action.
- f) Get together again in two weeks and reevaluate the situation.
- g) If problem persists, the child will be referred to another school or be asked not to return the following school year.

## **Problem Solving**

Teachers will help children develop problem solving skills, by overseeing the process until they are sure that the child learned the process. Parents of the children that continue to display unacceptable behavior will be notified and a conference will be held. Children who display severe problems will be sent to the office.

### **Problem-solving process based on Peace Education**

- a) Identify the problem. "You hit me."
- b) Identify the parties involved. "Susan and John are hitting me."
- c) State the problem. "I don't like it when you hit me."
- d) Discuss the problem. "Well, we don't like it when you're mean to us."
- e) Come to a solution or agreeable conclusion. "We won't hit you and you won't be mean."

### **Injury/Accidents**

When an injury/accident occurs, basic first aid will be administered. If needed 911 will be called. The teacher will fill out an injury/accident form with details. The student will be taken to the office. The parent will be called by office staff to inform of the incident. The parent will have the option to pick up the child if necessary. The parent will receive the injury/accident report with a follow up call or a verbal conversation from the teacher to explain the details of the incident at the end of the day.

### **Illness and Exclusion Criteria**

When ill, the child will be sent to the office and the child's temperature will be taken. A tympanic (ear) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness. Parents will be notified if the child has a temperature. Children with a fever will be sent home. Children who have been diagnosed with a contagious disease **must** stay at home. Parents should notify the school. We protect all of our children. Children may NOT return until we receive a doctor's approval indicating that the child is no longer contagious.

### **Dispensing medication procedure**

Parents are responsible on administering the morning and afternoon medication. If they need a dose given at school, they must sign our medication release form. No medication will be administered without the authorization form signed. We encourage parents to give the first dose at home.

### **Health checks**

BMA conducts health checks on all children. Parents will be notified if their child is observed with any bruises, cuts, scratches etc.

### **Hearing and Vision**

A hearing and vision test must be conducted by their physician by the age of 4 years.

### **Vaccine-preventable diseases**

BMA has the best interest to protect all children and staff, therefore the caregiver will be required to have all the following immunizations:

- TB Test
- FLU Shot

If the caregiver is sick, we will ask them to go home.

### **Emergencies Procedures**

In case of severe weather or other emergencies, Brownsville Montessori Academy will follow the BISD school closings. In case of an emergency dismissal parents will be called by our staff.

**Emergency Preparedness Plan:**

When we plan for and execute our emergency plans, our first priority is getting the children out of harm's way safely. It is important that all staff, volunteers and parents understand our plan for emergency. We do practice every month, so they understand what is expected of them. We will sing songs, read books, and stay in a tight circle if the warning sirens go off. If and when needed, children will place their heads in their lap and cover their heads with the back of their hands. We do practice this position and they understand it. While we are sitting like this, we sing and talk to the children to help keep everyone calm. The teacher's lesson plan book is with them during emergency time.

We will contact all families by cell phone after ensuring that all children have been safely evacuated. Attendance will be taken at the emergency location too. The teacher's attendance planner includes parent and emergency contact phone numbers, authorization for emergency care, and physician's information. Their safety is our first concern.

**Evacuation**

Evacuation is indicated by the alarm. Students are prepared for any emergency, they practice Fire Drills, Severe Weather and Lockdown procedures. Children will be evacuated together with their teacher. If an emergency arises and we are not able to stay on our property we will evacuate to one of the following emergency locations. We will walk to these locations. Ms. Claudia leads the way, the children follow, and Ms. Blanca brings up the rear.

**Emergency Evacuations**

1. Dairy Queen 844 Boca Chica Blvd. Brownsville, Texas 78520
2. CVS 1454 Central Blvd.
3. HEB 1628 Central Blvd.

We will contact all families by cell phone after ensuring that all children have been safely evacuated. Attendance will be taken at the emergency location. The teacher's attendance planner includes parent and emergency contact phone numbers, authorization for emergency care, and physician's information. Their safety is our first concern. Once we assure that all children are safe, we will contact each parent to let them know of our situation and any change in our location. Our staff will continue to care for the children until each child has been released to the parent.

**Fire Drills**

Fire drills are practiced once a month. Students will exit the rooms according to the posted diagrams and gather by our front fence facing Coria St. Fire drills are practiced monthly and severe weather drills will be practiced every three months to prepare children how to react in emergency situations. Evacuation routes and relocation sites inside and outside of BMA are documented on the facility's emergency diagram which is posted in each individual classroom by exit doors.

**Lockdown**

If danger is imminent, classes will be alerted by the director. All doors and windows should be closed, and no one is allowed outside until the danger is over. In case of an intruder entering

BMA: Children will be gathered in their room by their teacher or whichever room is easily accessible at the time. The door will be locked, light will be turned off and children will be moved to a safe area within the classroom. We practice drills 4 times a year

### **Severe weather**

In case of the need to stay put due to a Tornado, Hurricane or other event placing the child at risk. We will relocate to a room without windows.

Our rooms have:

Battery-powered flashlight, first aid kit is stored in the office. Cell phone, emergency contact sheets and Emergency kit with activities, snacks, and water. Parents/guardians will be notified once the immediate threat has passed. We practice this drill 4 times a year.

### **Birthdays**

We celebrate a child's birthday with a "Celebration of Life". Parents are asked to attend or to send a short summary of the child's life, highlighting special events for each year with corresponding pictures if available. Parents may provide a healthy snack as part of the celebration. Special treats for birthday celebrations include muffins, fruit, sandwiches, or other nutritious foods. This event is a short celebration of life not a birthday party. ***High sugar options will not be permitted.***

### **Napping blanket and pillow**

We highly recommend the blanket & pillow combination that can be purchased at the Parker Uniform Company. They are easy for children to carry, they store well at school and they are easy to launder. Blankets are sent home on every Friday and must be sent back on Monday.

### **Pacifiers & Baby Bottles**

Please do not send pacifiers or baby bottles with your children. They impede the development of speech and may also cause problems to teeth.

### **Breastfeeding**

There is an area available for mothers who wish to come by to feed their child. The Breastfeeding room is right next to the Toddlers classroom. Students are also welcomed to bring their breastmilk. *Human milk is the best source of milk for infants. Additionally, breastfeeding supports optimal health and development.*

### **Potty Training**

When you are ready to start potty training please let us know so that we can also begin at school. Parent- Teacher Communication is essential for this process.

### **Toys**

**Please do not let your child bring toys to school.** Children at this age do not understand sharing yet and toys can cause problems in the classroom. They can also get lost or broken.

### **Lunch**

Nutritious foods are encouraged. Children may bring a lunch to school. Hot lunch program is available to all students. Lunch menu is emailed or sent home on monthly basis and posted on

our parent board in the office. Snack menu is posted weekly in the toddler classroom. No student will be left without a meal.

### **Snacks**

All children have snack time in the morning. BMA parents take turns providing a snack for their child's school. The teacher will send the parents a grocery list and count when it is the child's turn. Snack suggestions include: vegetables and fruits, crackers and cheese, raisins, nutritious cookies and muffins, bread, juice etc. This is done once a year and your child will have snack all year. Snack menu is posted in the toddler classroom. Parents have the option of paying in the office a snack fee of \$150.00 in lieu of purchasing snacks this is once per year.

### **Sunscreen & Insect repellent**

We recommend parents apply any sunscreen lotion or insect repellent at home before dropping off your child. If you wish to have us apply any sunscreen or repellent, student is required to bring their own in a zip lock bag labeled with your child's name and a note stating the administering instructions and must be signed by the parent or guardian.

### **Pets**

Animals are not allowed on our toddler premises. Students are not allowed to bring them from home.

### **Transportation/Water Activities**

BMA will not provide transportation or participate in water activities for toddlers (swimming pools).

### **Field Trips**

They will have field trip at the end of the year, parents or a guardian MUST accompany their child. Elementary students are encouraged to participate in various educational field trips.

### **Uniforms**

Students are required to wear a uniform on a regular basis. The purpose of the uniform is:

- To promote a scholastic environment,
- To construct a learning atmosphere, and
- To develop a sound personal habits and a positive self-image.

Uniforms may be purchased at [www.tbiley.com](http://www.tbiley.com) Socks and shoes should be solid grey, white, or black. Shorts worn under uniform should also be a solid grey, white, black, or burgundy. On Friday's they may wear the BMA T-Shirt with jeans. T-shirts may be purchased in the office.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

BMA teachers have an annual training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of Child Abuse. There are four major types of child maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Any warning sign that a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect and factors indicating that a child is at risk for abuse or neglect will be reported. Children are our priority. Parents are welcome to visit our school any time during our operation time to observe their child, our activities, the building, the premises without prior approval.



**Physical Abuse** is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

Suspect Physical Abuse When You See:

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

**Neglect** is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused. Suspect Neglect When You See:

- Obvious malnourishment
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn or dirty clothing
- Stealing or begging for food
- Child unattended for long periods of time
- Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Frequent tardiness or absence from school

**Sexual Abuse** includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or producing pornographic materials.

Suspect Sexual Abuse When You See:

- Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- Sexual comments, behaviors or play
- Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- Sexual victimization of other children

**Emotional Abuse** is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

Suspect Emotional Abuse When You See:

- Over compliance

- Low self-esteem
- Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
- Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems

If parent suspect their child has been abused or neglected they may contact DFPS at 1-800-252-5400 or may visit the website for further information ([www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us))

## **V. PARENT PARTICIPATION**

### **Parent Information**

Parents are welcome to visit the Parent Board in the entrance. Which has the following information available for review: the latest inspection conducted by the DFPS -Child Care licensing department, permits, accreditation, permits etc.

### **Class Presenters**

Parents who have a talent, career or hobby are encouraged to share their gift with the school. Please plan with the director to make a school or a class presentation.

### **Parent Meetings and Notifications**

BMA will schedule open house and other events. Parent participation is valuable to our school culture and to the child's sense of community. BMA invites parents to make every effort to join us during special meetings. Parents are welcome to visit the school without seeking prior approval during the hours of operation.

### **Communication**

Brownsville Montessori Academy will circulate a monthly newsletter that will be sent home or emailed to parents. Weekly bulletins or notices with important information will be sent with the student as necessary. Our website will also be available to access information or download newsletters. Parents are asked to check emails frequently as monthly invoices will be sent electronically. We also have a parent group on WhatsApp. The purpose of the chat is to remind parents and inform solely school matters. Please text 956-203-6755 your name, child's name and ask to be added to the WhatsApp Parents Chat.

### **Observations & Visitations**

We encourage parents to observe their child in the classroom setting. We have cameras in our classrooms and parents are welcome to observe on our entrance screen. These visits will help parents and teachers develop a more meaningful discussion of the child's progress.

## **New Requirements Regarding Gang-Free Zones**

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This new statute requires that information about gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in care at licensed child care centers. The following is a tip sheet to assist in complying with the new law. This information may be posted at your child care operation or copies may be provided to parents.

### **What is a gang-free zone?**

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The specific locations include day care centers. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your child care center. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

### **How do parents know where the gang-free zone ends?**

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution. Parents may contact their local municipality or court house for information about obtaining a copy of a map if they choose to do so.

### **What is the purpose of gang-free zones?**

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties.

### **What does this mean for my school?**

A child care center must inform parents or guardians of children attending the center about the new gang-free zone designation. This means parents or guardians need to be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of your center is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

### **When do I have to comply with the new requirements?**

The law is already in effect, so providers should begin sharing information regarding gangfree zones immediately. Licensing staff will offer technical assistance to facilitate compliance until rules are proposed and adopted, which is estimated to occur in March 2010. In the meantime, providers should update their operational policies and procedures to include providing the information mandated by this law to the parents or guardians of the children in care.

For further information please contact your licensing representative or your local licensing office.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Received

Child Care Licensing/jr  
DFPS



# Brownsville Montessori Academy

## FAMILY HANDBOOK RECEIPT

Thank you for taking the time to read our Family Handbook. If you have questions about Brownsville Montessori Academy's policy or procedures, please contact the Director. **If there are no questions, please sign below and return to BMA office.** We must have a receipt on file for every family enrolled at BMA.

**This is to acknowledge that I have read a copy of the Brownsville Montessori Academy Family Handbook and have no questions regarding its content.**

Print Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name Print \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_