



Parent Handbook 2025-2026

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Section 1: Introduction

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to our school! Brilliant Star Montessori School is committed to creating an environment that is peaceful and inviting for children, where their natural drive toward self-development and independence is nurtured, supported and celebrated.

Nestled in a house, we provide a safe and familiar environment for the child, giving them a sense of security and safety. We have a beautiful yard and gardens, allowing unlimited and spontaneous opportunities for learning and exploring outdoors for our classes. Our beautiful school setting indoor and outdoor provides children with a gentle sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world.

Our school is fully equipped with Montessori materials and our classroom Directors are Montessori certified with extensive teaching experience. Our facility also has a kitchen and laundry area where the children will be given opportunities to learn these practical life skills. We have a dedicated room for our Music program, as well as a movement room, where we will be able to do all types of physical activities such as stretching, Pilates, dance, fitness, skill development, and games. We also have a library area where students will be given opportunities to sign out books. We take the Elementary children on excursions into our 'real' world for positive learning experiences related to their curricular themes, as well as opportunities for skilled instruction in physical activities.

Children at Brilliant Star Montessori experience joyful learning and social interaction throughout their day. Each child is allowed the freedom to explore and develop at his or her own pace in an atmosphere where learning through helping, working and playing is pleasurable.

The Montessori Philosophy:

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) developed her philosophy of education through careful observation of children and through training in medicine, psychology, and anthropology.

Dr. Montessori discovered that children pass through 'sensitive periods' of development in their early years – when they are particularly receptive to

certain stimuli. Maria Montessori described the child's mind between the time of birth and six years of age as the "absorbent mind" stating that during these years, the child has a tremendous ability to learn and assimilate from the world around them. The Montessori approach introduces the child to materials, which the child is interested in and which are specifically designed to develop and enhance their senses. The children are also given the freedom to choose the materials they work with which creates a love and joy for learning.

The Montessori Method aims for the fullest possible development of the whole child. Dr. Montessori believed that children who develop a sense of pride, independence, self-discipline and a belief in their own abilities, would be equipped for life-long learning and success.

Vision Statement

To cultivate a life-long love of learning while developing caring and respectful individuals who positively contribute to the world around them.

Mission Statement

Guided by the Montessori philosophy and The Virtues Project, we will provide a peaceful and caring environment that nurtures the development of every child and their natural curiosity for learning.

Montessori Education:

Montessori Education is based on the belief that each person carries a love of learning within himself or herself, which, given the proper environment, becomes a motivating force to explore the world. A child who has been encouraged to explore and allowed to self-direct from an early age will carry throughout life the tendency to be an active, creative, and broadly focused learner.

The Montessori classroom is a 'child centered community', which facilitates independent learning and exploration and allows the child to experience a sense of both freedom and discipline. This enables the child

to act, grow, and develop according to their inner direction physically, mentally and spiritually. The classroom has a distinct sense of order and beauty. Everything in the classroom has a specific use and can be touched and manipulated by the child. The materials are specifically designed to allow the child to learn through their senses and movements. The atmosphere is encouraging, peaceful, caring and safe. All the activities are specifically purposeful, calming, and creative.

Each child is given guidance and support according to their needs and personal capability. This allows for individually paced development in a non-competitive atmosphere. The classroom ideally will have an equal split of boys and girls varying in age. The grouping of these ages together facilitates cooperative interaction, role modeling, and mutual assistance among the younger and older children.

The goal for the Montessori child is to establish the foundations for a lifetime of creative and joyful learning.

Casa Program: **(Preschool and Kindergarten)**

Casa students are of preschool and kindergarten age, 3-6 years old, and form a community of a maximum of 19 children all working together or alongside one another. Equal numbers of each age level (3's, 4's and 5's) create an optimum dynamic for learning. Older children are examples and mentors for the younger children.

The Director's role is one primarily of guide/facilitator. The child is taken through a sequence of lessons that are designed to create greater skill and independence. Students, once introduced to the materials, have the freedom to move about and choose their own learning activities leading to increased confidence and satisfaction.

Dr. Maria Montessori discovered that children at this age have extraordinary powers of the mind. She called it 'the absorbent mind'. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to absorb knowledge with peak receptivity. The Primary Montessori environment takes advantage of this opportunity by creating a classroom rich with material for learning.

The Casa curriculum integrates several focus areas into a fully comprehensive 3-year program. The prepared environment and the

guidance of the Director help the child attain the following goals during their Casa school years:

Practical Life Skills — in which they learn to care for themselves and the environment. These help develop a sense of order, coordination, concentration, and independence. Practical life activities such as polishing, buttoning, and pouring strengthen motor skills and concentration.

Sensorial Skills — by clarifying and putting names to the senses, colour, texture, weight and shape, a child develops knowledge of the real, which is the basis for later abstraction. Many of these materials are precursors to mathematics and geometry.

Language Skills — are developed and encouraged at a time when they are highly receptive to sounds, the alphabet, words and stories, reading and writing.

Mathematical Skills — internalizing the concepts of numbers, symbols, sequencing, operations, and memorization of basic facts through manipulation of the Montessori mathematics materials.

Cultural Skills — understanding and appreciating different peoples of the world, and a fascination for science in the world around them. The world's geography and people are explored through such materials as maps, flags, water and landforms, and books.

Integrated Art, Music, and Physical Activities — the Arts are incorporated into our daily classroom activities. The children have access to a variety of musical instruments daily and will be given specialized music lessons as well. They are given the opportunity to express themselves through dance and are exposed to skilled instruction in physical activities. Various mediums and techniques in art are explored while discovering and learning about local and famous artists. We have also implemented art, music and physical activities into our day to stimulate and energize our bodies.

Lower Elementary Community:

As students move from the Casa program into Lower Elementary, academic and developmental needs change. Students move from the sensorial level to the abstract. A turning towards the intellectual and moral

sides of life also occurs at this age. There is a great transformation in the child – wanting to explore the world in which he/she lives, wanting to learn what is right or wrong, and wishing to explore meaningful roles in society. Children of this age want to know how everything came to be, the history of the universe, how our world works and why humans behave as they do. They ask the BIG questions and need real answers.

Montessori Elementary Education speaks to a child's imagination to begin a life-long voyage of learning and discovery, and balances the imagination with concrete, hands-on materials that help the child understand the abstract. The children are in the same class for 4 years permitting the Director to become very familiar with each child's development and follow his or her progress through the years, allowing each child to progress at his or her own pace. The multi-age class encourages younger children to learn from and emulate the older students, while older students can teach and be role models for younger ones.

Respect for each Individual's learning process—The Montessori Elementary classroom continues the experience of individualized learning the children benefit from in the Casa years. Respect for each child and his or her process of exploration is paramount as well as the Elementary community as a whole. Social development blossoms with the large age span, as the spirit of cooperation encourages children to create friendships that have greater depth.

Curriculum— Our Elementary curriculum follows the Saskatchewan curriculum within the Montessori method and includes all the traditional subjects – Language, Mathematics, Geometry, Geography, History, Art, Music, Physical Education, Drama, French, and the Sciences. The Montessori curriculum is built around the Five Great Montessori Lessons given each year – the creation of the Universe, the coming of life on Earth, the timeline of humans, the development of language, as well as the development of mathematics and inventions. The aim is to inspire and instill a sense of awe and plant the seeds for further investigations. Students are encouraged to seek understanding of a subject through research, discussion, experiments and hands-on experience.

A Sense of Independence—The children have daily and weekly requirements for their work periods. They plan their work time and may work alone or with a partner. They learn to think, make decisions and self-direct their study independently and in groups. They learn to become independent, self-disciplined and responsible for their work each day and are accountable for their time through daily and weekly monitoring with their Director.

Interrelated Studies—The Elementary child has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Therefore, a Montessori Elementary education is intended to provide an integration of all areas of study rather than a collection of memorized facts. It gives a systematic framework for studying and researching all things that interest the children. The core academics of reading, writing and mathematics are refined through applied work that starts from the children's own questions from exploring and learning about the world around them.

World Citizens—The children work in an atmosphere of kindness and mutual respect. Learning to serve humanity is an integral part of the curriculum. The Elementary classroom is an environment in which children accept responsibility for themselves, and begin to see themselves as people of integrity and character who have a role to play in the global community.

The Classroom Director:

A well-trained, sensitive and caring adult is the key link between the child and the learning environment. In a Montessori classroom, the term "Director" is used to describe the role of the guiding adult. The Director is specifically trained in observing the child's development and demonstrates the use of materials and assesses when to offer new challenges to each child. She assists the child's progress with attentive care and provides a positive, encouraging atmosphere for the child.

"The Director's role is to observe and understand each individual child as they pursue their own path, having the freedom to make their own choices and learning to work alone without interruption. In this way, the child will move through the various stages of independence, while the Director will 'help the child to act, will, and think for himself'" (North American Montessori Center, 85).

Educational Accreditation:

Brilliant Star Montessori School is registered as a Qualified Independent School with the Saskatchewan Department of Education and meets all the educational requirements of the Saskatchewan Curriculum and the Montessori Curriculum. Brilliant Star is also a registered Charitable Organization.

Elementary Teaching Staff:

Our Administrator, Lower Elementary Senior Directress and Curriculum

Advisor, Ms. Julie is trained and accredited through the North American Montessori Centre for the Lower Elementary, Casa, and Infant/ Toddler programs. She also has her MACTE Elementary Montessori accreditation through the Montessori Teacher's College. Ms. Julie attained a B.Sc. and a B.Ed at the University of Saskatchewan. She has taught in a Montessori classroom as a Director since 2004 and has also taught in the public system for 7 years. Ms. Julie is the founder of Brilliant Star Montessori School and has led our staffing team as our Administrator since our first year in 2009. Ms. Julie has also written Montessori articles for the North American Montessori Training Centre and has many of her pieces published on their website. She has nineteen years of experience coaching children (kayak, canoe, swimming, soccer, volleyball, and track and field). She has coached on a local, provincial, and national level for the sport of sprint canoe and kayak. Ms. Julie has also taught as an instructor at the Ecology Club for Kids for three years in Saskatoon and has received her facilitator training and certification in the Virtues Project, which is a course on Character Building Education for families and schools. Ms. Julie's passion and enthusiasm for the Montessori philosophy and The Virtues Project guides her in her roles at our school.

Our AM Elementary Assistant, Ms. Sarah S. completed her Casa Training through the North American Montessori Centre in 2021. Ms. Sarah has also attained a B.A. and a B.Ed at the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina respectively. Ms. Sarah has also taught as a substitute teacher with the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools for eight years. Ms. Sarah grew up in a Saskatoon, and enjoyed playing with the Wind Orchestra during her time at the U of S. Ms. Sarah enjoys travelling and has learnt a lot from her travels to Japan, Australia, Poland and Ukraine. All those experiences have given Ms. Sarah a wealth of understanding of the diversity and culture of the world. When she's not at school, Ms. Sarah loves to do many activities with her family including camping, swimming, biking, and going for walks in nature. Ms. Sarah has assisted with some Nature camps during the summers through Wildernook Fresh Air Learning. This will be Ms. Sarah's fourth year on the staffing team at Brilliant Star Montessori and she can't wait to share her joy of learning with the students again. Ms. Sarah has two children and her oldest is excited to be returning to the Casa class again this fall.

Our PM Elementary Assistant (T/W), Ms. Keyla, earned her Early Childhood Education Certification in 2025 through Saskatchewan Polytechnic. While newly certified, she began working with children professionally in 2023 and has served as a Sunday School Co-Director since 2022. These experiences sparked her passion for creating spaces where children feel safe, valued, and free to explore and grow. She looks forward to continuing to learn the Montessori philosophy. Born and raised in Mexico, Ms. Keyla carries a deep love for culture, music, homemade food, and the power of community. These roots shape her joyful and inclusive approach in the classroom. Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, going on outdoor adventures, and expressing her creativity through crafts, photography, and gardening. She is excited to join Brilliant Star Montessori School and looks forward to a meaningful year with the Casa community!

Our PM Elementary Assistant, Ms. Lisa attained a B.Ed from the University of Saskatchewan and is trained and accredited through the North American Montessori Centre for Upper Elementary. She has many years of experience working with children in Montessori schools in Saskatoon, as well as experience teaching online as both a teacher and a vice principal. This will be Ms. Lisa's second year at BSM. Ms. Lisa enjoys spending time with her husband and children, both at home and at the lake. She and her husband live on an acreage close to their hometown of Aberdeen. Ms. Lisa and her family love animals; they currently have 3 dogs and 2 cats. Eventually, they will have chickens, and maybe a piglet or two!

Our Elementary Music Directress, Ms. Jackie, has her Bachelor of Music in Music Education along with her Bachelor of Education. Ms. Jackie has worked in Montessori schools as an educational assistant and a Music directress where she worked directly with toddler, preschool and kindergarten-aged children. Outside of the classroom, Ms. Jackie runs her own private violin studio of over 30 children, several toddler and preschool Music classes, and string quartets. She also volunteers her time with Saskatoon Summer Players and Cornerstone Theater to help put on large productions. Ms. Jackie has been working at Brilliant Star Montessori School since 2018 and is looking forward to another great year at Brilliant Star Montessori School.

Casa Teaching Staff:

Our Casa Directress, Ms. Goya, has completed her MACTE Montessori Casa Director training from the North American Montessori Centre and has also completed her Casa Director accreditation through The Montessori Teachers College. Ms. Goya also has certification for Montessori Music and Art from The Centre for Guided Montessori Studies. Ms. Goya received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Tamkang University in Taipei, Taiwan and completed her ECE (Early Childhood Education) Certificate through SIAST. She has worked with children since 2000 in Kindergarten and Elementary schools and was also an EFL teacher overseas. She has been working on Decorative Painting for many years and has acquired a teaching certificate for decorative painting. You can see some of Ms. Goya's beautiful art work in our school yard and in our classrooms! Ms. Goya's hobbies are painting, gardening, biking, camping and hiking. Ms. Goya has been working at Brilliant Star Montessori School since 2013!

Our Casa Assistant (T/W), Ms. Lynzie, has completed her Montessori Casa Assistant diploma from The Centre for Guided Montessori Studies. She has also graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a B.Sc. majoring in Kinesiology with Great Distinction. Through the years, she has been involved with physical activity programs for children of varying ages and abilities. Some of these programs include PAAL (Physical Activity for Active Living), Special Olympics and teaching dance for 7 years. She has taken training through "The National Coaching Certification Program" and "Sports Medicine and Science Council of Saskatchewan" for multi-sport training and safety certifications. Ms. Lynzie has been the Elementary Physical Education Instructor at our school for five years and the Casa assistant for one year. She is an energetic individual who is passionate about a healthy lifestyle and having fun through physical activity. She is overjoyed to be returning back to the Casa assistant role this school year.

Our Casa Assistant (M,Th/F), Ms. Keyla, earned her Early Childhood Education Certification in 2025 through Saskatchewan Polytechnic. While newly certified, she began working with children professionally in 2023 and has served as a Sunday School Co-Director since 2022. These experiences sparked her passion for creating spaces where children feel safe, valued, and free to explore and grow. She looks forward to continuing to learn the Montessori philosophy. Born and raised in Mexico, Ms. Keyla carries a deep love for culture, music, homemade food, and the power of community. These roots shape her joyful and inclusive approach in the classroom.

Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, going on outdoor adventures, and expressing her creativity through crafts, photography, and gardening. She is excited to join Brilliant Star Montessori School and looks forward to a meaningful year with the Casa community!

Organizational Structure

Founding Members: Ms. Julie alongside with Ms. Susan are the founding members of our school who together built our school to what it is today. Together with the Montessori philosophy and The Virtues Project, they created the vision and foundation of our school in 2009.

Brilliant Star Montessori School is a registered Charitable Organization. The corporation has four Board of Directors: Victoria Markovich, Susan Pezderic, Jason Danielson, and Bev Pongracz.

Chairperson:

Susan Pezderic
skp@sasktel.net

Secretary:

Bev Pongracz
basilblake@icloud.com

Executive Member:

Jason Danielson
jdanielson@seedtesting.com

Executive Member:

Victoria Markovich
brilliantstarmontessorimsvikki@gmail.com

Ms. Julie is our Administrator (Principal) of our school as well as our Elementary Directress. She is also the Curriculum Advisor, and our designated Professional A teacher who oversees the planning and assessment of the Casa program. Ms. Julie attends Board meetings to report to our Board.

Board meetings are held periodically throughout the year should you like to submit any necessary questions, comments, or suggestions to the Board. Parents are encouraged to be involved in our school by joining the Star Community Council and by serving as volunteers for school functions throughout the year.

The primary functions of the Board are 1) to establish the school's institutional mission and define the fundamental objectives and core values, 2) to establish policies under which the school will operate, 3) to advise the school Administrator who will translate the school's mission and objectives into day-to-day operation, 4) to oversee the on-going operation of the school within Board policy and government regulations, and 5) to look to the future and plan for long-term institutional growth and development.

Goals and Objectives:

As previously stated, the goal for the Montessori child is to establish the foundations for a lifetime of creative and joyful learning. Our Montessori School will strive to provide a stimulating and carefully planned environment where children can develop within themselves the foundational skills and attitudes essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning. Our school will further strive to assist the child to attain the following:

- A positive attitude towards school and learning
- Respect for themselves, others, and the environment
- Self-discipline and independence within the context of the community
- A high degree of self-esteem
- Habits of concentration, initiative, and perseverance
- A sense of teamwork
- Environmental and peaceful thinking as world citizens
- Their development as a whole person, mentally, emotionally, and physically

Star Community Builders

The Star Community Builders is a group that may be comprised of Brilliant Star Montessori parents, Directors, Board representatives, interested students, and guardians. Each member of our school community is encouraged to become a Star Community Builder. The mandate of this group is to build community within our school and provide fundraising opportunities to enhance the programming and beautification of our school.

Section 2: Morning and Afternoon Procedures

School Hours:

Brilliant Star Montessori School Casa and Elementary programs begin at 8:45 a.m. The school day will run until 3:30 p.m. All students are due in class by 9:00 a.m. and all full-day students will be expected to stay until class is dismissed. It is a courtesy to students and staff to **arrive quietly and on time. At 8:45, students begin working in both classrooms and a loud entryway is very distracting to them. Due to a small entry space, we prefer that drop off is quick.** If you need to speak with a Director in the morning, we appreciate short messages. If you need to discuss something at length with a Director, please set up an appointment or speak with them at dismissal time.

The school is not responsible for students who arrive at school earlier than 8:45 a.m. and stay later than 3:40 p.m. unless they are enrolled in the Extended Care Program.

Picking your child up early: Naturally, there will be occasions when you will need to take your child out of school early for a doctor's appointment or similar obligation. To ensure that your child will be ready, please speak to the Directors ahead of time to let them know the time that you will be picking him or her up with sufficient and reasonable notice.

Saying Goodbye: Tips For Casa Parents On Separation: Initially, it can be difficult for parents and young children to separate at the beginning of the school year. We have found that a short and positive goodbye is easiest for the child. We do not recommend parents escorting their child into the classroom. The prolonged goodbye often makes the separation more difficult. Feel free to text the school after arrival for reassurance that your child has settled in and is adjusting well if needed.

To eliminate congestion in our limited entry space, we would like parents to walk their child(ren) to the door, but say their goodbyes before the child enters, as we need to keep the door entry space clear for students. A quick farewell for parents and children outside is best. It is fine to come in; however, if you have any concerns or messages and need to speak with a staff member in the morning. **New or younger students may need their parent to walk them into the entry space initially,** but we encourage you to help foster their independence as they are ready by saying goodbyes outside the door.

Parking

As a courtesy to our neighbours, we would appreciate if you could **park along our school property** either along Gray Ave. or Dunlop St. and not in front of any neighbour's property if at all possible. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter. Our neighbours have also asked that you not turn around in their driveway, so we ask you to please respect these wishes. During rezoning, we agreed with the neighbourhood to have quick drop off and pick up times so that there is not limited parking for our neighbours. We appreciate your cooperation.

Morning Arrivals

Parents should accompany their child(ren) to the door and say their goodbyes outside before the student enters the school. **Please ensure your child is wearing a coat and the necessary winter gear to the door in inclement weather.**

For the protection and safety of each child, you must escort your child to the school door and release them into our care. Please do not allow children to cross the roads unattended. Please have them hold your hand and cross safely to the school property. Please ensure the gate is closed and latched behind you each time you enter or leave the yard.

As a courtesy to all families and to keep traffic moving in regards to parking, quick drop-offs are appreciated. Any student arriving before 8:45 a.m., will be taken to the Extended care room.

For the safety of our students, the front school door Casa use will be locked at all times. The back school door will only be unlocked from 8:45 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. for Elementary arrival and then will be locked the remainder of the day.

Morning Arrival:

Students may be brought to school between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m. Any child that must be dropped off before 8:45 a.m., will be taken to the Extended Care morning program. There will be a nominal charge for this service.

Afternoon Arrival

Parents may bring their Afternoon half-day students to school **between 12:45 and 1:00 p.m.**

Dismissal

Unless we receive specific permission from you to do otherwise, we will only release your child to the people that you have specifically indicated on your registration form that every family completes annually. **We must receive a note, or in an emergency, a phone call, from you in order to release your child to someone not on your list.** This rule also applies to students going home with school friends as well.

We prefer a photograph of anyone new you've given permission to pick up your child if he or she is not familiar to our staff. This includes emergency contacts. Please make sure all of your car-pool drivers are listed on your registration form.

All Elementary and afternoon, and full-day Casa students will be dismissed from the back yard each day. Morning Half Day Casa students will be dismissed from the school front door.

Dismissal for Morning Half-Day Students:

Casa students who only stay for the morning session will be dismissed from the front school door between 11:25 and 11:30 a.m. **We expect prompt pick-up by 11:30 a.m.** The staff will need to continue duties in the classroom and begin lunch supervision at this time, so we ask for your cooperation for a quick pick-up.

There will be a charge of \$2 per minute past 11:30 a.m. if you have not picked up your child. It is a courtesy to all staff and children to ensure you are on time for pick-up. When parents are late, it worries the children.

Dismissal for Afternoon and Full-Day Students:

The normal school day will end at 3:30 p.m. for all full-day and afternoon students.

This is not an outside playtime for children. When we say goodbye to the student at dismissal, we are dismissing them to leave in your care.

All students who stay after 3:40 (parent present or not), will be charged Extended care fees. When we say goodbye at dismissal, we are dismissing them into your care from our care or we are dismissing them into Extended Care. Parents who have not picked up their child(ren) by 3:40 p.m., will have to pick them up from the Extended Care Program. In such cases,

the parents will be charged a nominal fee for this after-school care.

After School Extended Care ends at 5:00 pm. There will be a significant charge of \$2 per minute past 5:00 p.m. if you have not picked up your child. If you know you will be late, please call the school extra care line at 306- 361-7827.

The school cannot be responsible for students after 3:40 p.m. unless they are enrolled in the Extended Care Program.

As a courtesy to all families and to keep traffic moving, quick pick-up times are appreciated.

Please encourage your child to look their Director in the eye and say goodbye each day.

Please ensure the gate is closed and latched behind you as you enter and leave the yard. We also kindly ask you to ensure the latch is closed gently so that the latch doesn't get damaged.

Attendance

All Brilliant Star Montessori students, even our youngest, are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving on time by 9:00 a.m. each school day.

It is a courtesy to students and staff to arrive **quietly and on time. By 8:45, students are already beginning to work in both classrooms and a loud entryway is very distracting to them.** Due to a small entry space, we prefer that drop off is quick and goodbyes are said outside the door. If you need to speak with a Director in the morning, we appreciate short messages. If you need to discuss something at length with a Director, please set up an appointment or speak with them at dismissal time or send a text to the school phone CASA: 306-361-STAR (7827); ELEM: 306-281-2011 or an email to the school email address: brilliantstarmontessori@gmail.com

Even though Brilliant Star is less formal and more flexible than many schools, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still essential. Students are expected to be in class by 9:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. respectively and to be present in class for the full school day (or for the full morning or afternoon session in the case of younger students enrolled for the half-day option).

Irregular attendance is disruptive to a child's education. Consistency and routine are important to every child's development, but they are especially important for Casa students.

We depend on your family's full support in this area. If we find that your child is arriving late more than three times in a month, we will need to meet to work out a solution.

One of the nice things about Brilliant Star Montessori is that we understand that every once in a while, we all love to take a little vacation from school. While we are fairly understanding and supportive, it is still important that you keep your child's absences to a minimum. Please notify the school with either a phone call, note or email with as much advance warning as possible to prepare for your child's absence.

Although our program is individualized, it still depends upon consistency and continuous progress. Every time a child misses school for whatever reason, there is a period of readjustment as he or she tries to get back into the routine of his/her work. The longer the absence, or when a child consistently misses a day or two of school, the more detrimental it becomes to his/her educational development.

Whenever your child needs to be excused early from school, please speak to the Directors ahead of time indicating the nature of the absence and the time when you will want them to be excused from class.

Extended Care Program:

We offer an on-site before and after care program to assist our families who require extended care for their children. Extended Care hours are from 7:45 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. The Extended Care Program is available for our children enrolled in the Casa and Elementary Programs. While scheduling Extended care, please keep in mind that extended school hours can make for a long day for young children and the purpose of this program is to assist working families.

Please keep in mind that to maintain our student/staff ratios in the Extended Care Program, we cannot always accommodate unexpected students. Parents need to plan ahead and schedule their child in the Extended Care Program. Parents who are not signed up for the Extended Care Program need to contact the school ahead of time to ask if the staff can accommodate their child. Staff may not be answering the phone

during school hours, but will check messages before and after school, and during the lunch break. We ask for your consideration to plan ahead as best you can.

- 1. Our staff cannot come in earlier, nor remain later, so we ask parents to please plan to arrive/pick-up within these time limits.**
2. The Extended Care Program opens at 7:45 a.m. Any students not enrolled in the Extended Care Program who arrive at school before 8:45 a.m., will go to the Extended Care room. There will be a charge for this service.
3. The After School Extended Care Program begins at 3:40 p.m. and closes at 5:00 p.m. Any student not picked up by 3:40 p.m. will be taken to the Extended Care Program. There will be a charge for this service.
4. The After School Extended Care Program ends at 5:00 p.m., at which time Brilliant Star Montessori closes for the day. **It is essential that all children be picked up by this time.** A \$2 / minute late fee will be added charged should any child not be picked up by 5:00 p.m. **Please show consideration to the Extended Care staff member who has other commitments at 5:00 p.m. by arriving on time.**
5. Please drop off and pick up your child from their designated door (Casa students from the front school door and Elementary students from the back school door). Please make contact with the staff member supervising your child before taking him/her out of the school. All children must be dismissed from the Extended Care Program supervisor.
6. Please don't forget that we cannot allow your child to leave the school with anyone who is not on your registration form unless you give your written permission or verbal consent with a phone call.
7. When arriving and picking up from Extra Care, please ring the doorbell instead of knocking, as we cannot always hear knocking.
8. You will be required to 'sign-in' and 'sign-out' your child for before and after school care. This will help us to calculate your monthly billing for this extended service.
9. Monthly care bills will be sent to each family who utilize this service at the end of each month. Prompt payment each month is appreciated.

Cold Weather Policy

School Closure: If it is necessary to close the school due to temperature or weather conditions, we will do our best to notify families by text and email with as much notice as possible. Brilliant Star Montessori School makes this decision independently of the Saskatoon Public School system. We will try our best to announce closings by 7:00 a.m.

Recess Policy: When the combined temperature and wind chill is -27 degrees, we do not go outside for recess.

When the combined temperature and wind chill is between -22 and -26 degrees, the staff on duty will make an informed decision as to whether we go outside. When the combined temperature and wind chill is above -22 degrees, we will go outside for recess and dismissal. **Please send your child prepared to go outside each day!**

If you do not want your child to go outside at recess or dismissal times, please take your child home during these times. Students may not stay in the classrooms during these times, as there is no supervision. There will be no exceptions. If your child is too sick to go outside, then they are too sick to be at school. Thank you for your understanding in this matter!

Please note that if the temperature (with wind chill) is below 10 degrees, we require students to wear a coat outside.

In situations of extreme weather, we may have to close the school temporarily. We will typically follow the protocols of the public schools in our area for such closures and notify families with as much notice as possible.

Section 3: Everyday Life at Brilliant Star Montessori

Starting School

When starting School, many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected.

New parents and students will be invited to tour the classroom before all students start school so that children can visit the classroom to meet their Directors and feel comfortable with our school before we start.

We will have designated days for just the Kindergarten and Grade 1 students at the start of school so they have a chance to familiarize themselves with the classroom routines before the remaining students begin.

On the first day of school, please don't linger too long in the class or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure your child where you will be during the day, and by what time you will pick them up. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The Directors are wonderful in helping children through these situations. Students who are having a hard time saying goodbye to mom or dad are usually quite fine and adjusted within a few minutes of mom and dad leaving.

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress in outfits that are neat, clean, comfortable, and appropriate for school. Younger children should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten by themselves (For example: pullover shirts, elastic waistbands, Velcro sneakers, etc.). Young children usually cannot manage the shoulder fasteners found on overalls, difficult buttons, nor shoelaces.

Please do not allow your child to come to school wearing:

- Clothing with holes or tears
- Outfits with bare midriffs, open backs, or halter tops (tops and bottoms must generously meet)
- Hats inside the school buildings

- Tiaras or headbands with attachments such as cat ears, animal horns or other bobbly items
- Fitbits, pocket chains or smart watches
- **Clothing imprinted with commercial images such as cartoon characters, mythical creatures (unicorns, mermaids, dragons), rock bands, violent or inappropriate pictures or words such as skulls and crossbones nor weapons** (these are very distracting to students' learning)
- Clothing with flip sequins (these are very distracting to students' learning and hard for students to understand the personal boundaries of another child)
- Short skirts, shorts, dresses – shorts, skirts and dresses should fall below the fingertips when hands are held at the child's side
- If your child prefers to wear skirts or dresses, please have them wear bloomers, shorts, or leggings under them as children do a lot of work sitting in various positions on the floor (if they choose to wear shorts underneath, please make sure their length also falls below the fingertips).

Shoes

Please do not allow your child to come to school wearing:

- Shoes with laces unless they can confidently tie them by themselves
- Open-toed shoes, backless sandals nor flip-flops
- **Shoes with lights** (these are very distracting to students' learning)
- Cowboy boots
- Shoes with cleats

Note: Students must wear socks during school time.

All students must bring a pair of inside running shoes to use inside the Gym. We ask that you send runners with non-marking soles to use at school please. Each child will also need a pair of slippers to use inside the school each day. Please send a plain pair of slippers that are not flip-flops and do not have cartoon characters on them. Moccasins work very well. Please ensure that slippers fit their proper foot size and have a back. Please label all footwear. We will send their slippers home during long school breaks for you to clean, repair and assess if they are still a good fit.

What all Students Need at School

- An extra set of clothing (pants, shirt, underwear, socks) to be kept at school during the year (Please bring these spare clothes in a large Ziploc bag labelled with your child's name on the outside and all items labeled inside)
- A water bottle with their name on it (students will be asked to take their water bottles home each day to wash).
- A pair of inside non-marking soled running shoes to use inside the Gym (labelled with their name). **Please do not send shoes with laces unless they are able to tie them successfully on their own.**
- A pair of slippers to use inside the school each day. Please send a **plain** pair of slippers that are not flip-flops and do not have cartoon characters on them. Please do not send slippers with bobbly parts on them. Moccasins work very well. **Please ensure that slippers fit to their proper foot size and have a back.**
- A functional backpack to fit their daily work, snack, lunch kit, and a pair of snow pants (during winter months). Please do not send backpacks with wheels on them, nor cartoon characters, nor logos that are not peaceful. Backpacks should fit an 8 ½ x 11 paper. **Please try to find a back pack that is the minimum size needed to fit these items so that it is not too large for your child).**
- **For students who stay for lunch:** An insulated lunch box with a thermos (for hot lunches when appropriate) that the child can open. Please include a reusable freezer block to keep perishables fresh.

All students pay a supply fee, which covers all the school materials that they will need during the year.

There will be a few costs for optional activities, which are not covered in tuition, such as book club orders, hot lunches, school pictures, or special extra-curricular activities.

Toys -Toys or stuffed animals should not be brought to school (even in or on backpacks). This includes toys on chain keys on their backpacks.

Sharing

Each Thursday, Casa students are invited to bring their own craft/artworks/ books they like/ special photo to share at circle time. They will show the class their sharing item and may say a few words about it and/or you could send a written message with an explanation about the item and the Director will read this to the class.

Textbooks

The Montessori curriculum is based on hands-on materials and research, rather than the traditional dependence on simplistic textbooks as the primary focus of learning. Much of our students' work in school involves the use of hands-on materials that remain in the classroom or readings in a wide range of reference or source books from the school, public libraries and their individual notebooks.

Naturally, it is essential that the children respect and take care of their books. Students are responsible for lost or damaged schoolbooks or library books. If a schoolbook has been damaged or lost, we ask you to replace that book or donate \$20 towards our library.

Lost and Found

Please ask your child's Director if you are missing an item. Please make sure you label your child's clothing and outdoor gear to help identify your child's belongings.

Lunch

Students staying for a full day bring their lunch to school every day in a clearly labelled lunch box or lunch bag. Please try to send a lunch kit that does not have cartoon characters or logos that are not peaceful. We kindly ask that the Bento box-style lunch kits with hinges for Casa students not be sent as there is not enough space for them on our Casa lunch tables.



(Bento-style lunch box that does not work for Casa tables)

The Brilliant Star Montessori community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness education program. Lunch is a very important part of your child's school day and their overall wellness, and we count on you to work with your child to teach them about health and nutrition.

Obviously, we all want to pack lunches that our children will eat. The challenge is to help them discover that wholesome, sugar-free foods can taste even better than junk food and don't have the negative effects on our bodies.

We encourage parents to be aware of the food that they pack for their children's snacks/lunches and how they can impact learning. Please be mindful and aware of the following ingredients when packing lunches:

- High levels of sugar (avoid foods that list sugar in the first three ingredients)
- Hydrogenated oils (this also includes shortening)
- Foods containing artificial flavouring or colouring

We discuss nutrition with the students throughout the year and we hope that we can contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters, slicing up fresh fruit, and preparing bite-sized slices of cheese.

We are committed to being a healthy environment; we will not allow sugary items to be eaten during the school day. Please do NOT send your child with sugary desserts nor drinks, pop, or chocolate milk in their lunches! Any product deemed to be 'sugary', will not be consumed at school and will be sent home.

Some examples of sugary desserts that are not to be sent to school may include:

Cookies, cakes, pudding, Rice Krispy Squares, Jell-O, candies, fruit snacks

that are not 100% real fruit, nor **any** item with chocolate.

In our efforts to encourage students to drink more water each day and reduce our plastic consumption, we ask for only water at school. Please do not send juice nor milk drinks to school. Students are asked to bring refillable water bottles each day.

Brilliant Star Montessori is a NUT FREE school. Please do not bring ANY nuts nor nut products to school in snacks nor in lunches. Any product not deemed to be nut free, may not be consumed at school and will be sent home with a note.

Litterless Lunches

Keeping in mind our environment, our school promotes litterless lunches. We encourage students to pack their lunch/snacks in re-useable containers/packages.

We would like the students to be aware of how garbage can be reduced and how they can help keep our environment clean and healthy. We have a composting program and promote recycling whenever possible.

We recommend lunch boxes with cool packs. All uneaten food, which can be contained, will be sent home. You'll want to monitor your children's lunch boxes to see what they like and dislike, and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. Older children often are very excited to prepare or help with preparing their lunches! We appreciate your care in preparing a nutritious lunch for your child(ren).

Casa students will have lunch at 12:00 p.m. and will go outside for recess before lunch from 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Elementary students have lunch at 12:00 and go outside for recess from 12:30 – 1:00 p.m. Our afternoon session begins at 1:00 p.m.

Snacks

Students will each bring their own individual snack to eat at school. In keeping with our healthy environment and fueling our bodies with nutritious foods, **we prefer only raw fruits and vegetables for our snacks in both classrooms.** Students have a snack as needed.

Brilliant Star Montessori is a NUT FREE school. Please do not bring ANY nuts nor nut products to school for snacks, nor in snack trays.

Special Dietary Restrictions: Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. Please be sure to notify the Directors if your child should avoid certain foods. This will be considered when the class does some cooking together. Children with excessive allergies may be asked to bring in their own snacks for their own safety.

We also have many food preparation lessons during class time that include fruit, veggies, muffins, etc.

Field Trips

Our Elementary class periodically takes field trips to local points of interest during the year. Field trips are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied, to interact with the larger community and build connections in our neighbourhood.

Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. Occasionally, we may ask parents to help with supervision during these activities. If you are interested, please speak with your child's Director. Please see the guidelines for School volunteers below.

A signature signed on the registration form at the beginning of the school year will cover all school field trips. We will always notify you in advance of each field trip.

Expenses for field trips are covered in the Activity fees.

Parent Volunteers

School volunteers must have a completed Criminal Records Check done and handed in to the school prior to volunteering with our school.

We ask that you do not bring any younger siblings along when you attend a field trip.

We ask our School volunteers to refrain from bringing hot beverages on field trips for the children's safety. We will send a list of ways you can help with supervision and safety on the field trip in advance for you to read when volunteering.

Birthdays, a Celebration of Life

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends.

Casa:

The Casa Birthday Circle is a thoughtful and concrete way for the children to feel connected with their place in the world. It is a lovely and simple class event that takes place to celebrate their Birthday during the child's Birthday month.

During the celebration, the child walks around the sun, symbolized with a candle, holding a globe, which represents the rotation of the earth for each year of their life. There is a Medicine Wheel Circle displaying pictures of the four seasons of the year encircling the sun symbol, which the child assembles on the floor before the celebration begins. The class all sing a song together each time the child walks around the sun marking each year's rotation of their life to the present year. We ask parents to please send one photo of the child standing for each year so we can see their growth. These photos will be put on a chart and set on the wall in the classroom so their friends can see what they looked like at each year as they do the walking around the sun.

If the child and family would like to send a Birthday gift for the Casa class or school, please look to our Wish List in the monthly Newsletter for ideas or we can discuss an alternative gift. Thank you.

The Birthday Circle is our way to celebrate each child's life. The children will probably be having Birthday parties of their own and we so ask children to refrain from talking about their parties in the classroom or on the playground, to avoid hurt feelings from friends who hear about a party and are not a part of the event. This applies if your child is the Birthday child or if they are an invited guest. You can help your child understand this situation by discussing this sensitive issue with them. Please send out your personal Birthday invitations outside of school hours. Thank you for your support and understanding.

Elementary:

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends at school. We celebrate birthdays in Elementary with a special Virtues Birthday circle where each student acknowledges a virtue they appreciate in the birthday child and we celebrate them together. We ask parents to please send one photo of the child for each year so we can see their growth. These photos will be set on a timeline mat so their friends can see what they looked like each year.

On their birthday circle day, the birthday child may wish to present the class with a small classroom gift in honour of the occasion. This is a means to enhance the school environment and it also enables the birthday child to experience the pleasure and value of giving rather than just receiving. Regarding choice of gifts or books to give, parents are kindly asked to consult the school wish list or the classroom Director. A small donation towards a larger wish list item is also a possibility. We have already pre-purchased a few books and wish list items (during sales) so some of these items are already being held in a special place until they have been donated.

We kindly ask that birthday snacks not be brought to birthday circles. As always, **please do NOT send treat bags nor toys for the children.**

For the consideration of all, please do not send birthday invitations to school to be passed out. These should be sent through the mail. You will find the addresses of Brilliant Star Montessori families in our family Directory. Thank you kindly for your understanding.

Celebrations

All classes emphasize celebrations during the course of the year; however, each class may add its own special touch on each celebration. We respect all cultures and religions in our school. We welcome families to share their cultural celebrations if they care to. Some of the annual traditions we may celebrate include:

- **International Children's Festival:** Traditionally held in late October, the school celebrates our diverse cultural backgrounds and the concept of a peaceful world. Ceremonies traditionally include a special assembly, music and dance. Students may dress in traditional clothing that represents either one branch of their family's roots or a cultural tradition

that they admire.

- **Thanksgiving:** A time for reflection, giving thanks, and community service.
- **Remembrance Day:** A time to discuss how we can solve problems or conflicts in peaceful ways.
- **Elementary Research Showcase:** In early February, the Elementary students will showcase their research projects to their parents.
- **Love Day:** This day is celebrated as close to Valentine's Day as possible and also incorporates Pink Shirt Day. Discussions regarding love and friendship for all are incorporated.
- **Earth Day:** Celebrating the coming of spring and the importance of stewardship for the Earth, the students become involved in meaningful environmental studies and projects and discuss ways they can care for our Earth.
- **Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day:** On March 21st, students will participate in discussing the importance of this day and how our actions and choices can help in the elimination of racial discrimination.
- **Science Fair:** In April, Elementary students create Science experiments to share with Casa students, parents, and guests.
- **Spring Celebration:** In late May/early June, we invite parents to enjoy some songs shared by students outside in our yard.
- **Picnic Day:** On our last school day together, all students who regularly stay for lunch enjoy a picnic lunch outside together (weather permitting).

Note: As a school, we do not celebrate Halloween. Please do not send children in costumes nor send candy to school.

Section 4: Student Health

Washrooms and AP311

All students have a right to safe washroom and changeroom usage. Our school provides two single-use private washrooms for use by any student or staff.

When your child is ill

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call or text the classroom phone: CASA: 306 -361-STAR (7827); ELEM: 306-281-2011 before 8:45 a.m. to let us know that they will be absent, so that we don't worry.

Students with infectious diseases, such as COVID, chicken pox, or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children's health, it is vital that you let the school know your child's doctor's diagnosis as soon as possible.

In the case of a common cold, the student should remain at home if the child has a fever, eye infection, or severe nasal excretions. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home also.

The student must wait 24 hours before returning to school if they have experienced vomiting, fever, diarrhea or an infection.

If your child has a rash or unknown skin rash, they may not return to the school until they have seen a doctor to determine if it is infectious. **Infectious rashes must be healed (scabbed over) before they return to school.** They may not be at the school while the rash is still open. If your child has experienced either a contagious or non-contagious rash, parents are to speak with the Director before they return to school to indicate the doctor's diagnosis. **Any student will be sent home if any of the above symptoms appear while he or she is at school.**

If your child gets sick at school

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will contact you to arrange for them to be picked up right away. We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, so you may want to make arrangements with a friend or relative in advance for these emergencies.

Weather permitting, students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, they are probably too ill to be at school.

Medical Updates

If your child has any health issues, allergies or has been introduced to new medication, it is important to inform the Director of these new situations. We prefer you speak directly with the Director on these issues and keep them informed.

Emergency Care

All our permanent staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. In the event of any situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your emergency information on your registration form up-to-date. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

If your child needs immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room at a Saskatoon Hospital. Naturally, we will continue our effort to contact you.

Please be sure to keep your emergency information form up to date and inform the school immediately if there are any changes in your address or phone number during the academic year.

Medication

At Brilliant Star Montessori School, we do not administer medication to students.

Please do not send to school any medication with your child, including aspirin, cough medicines, puffers or other over-the-counter drugs in their backpacks, etc. These medications present a safety issue for other students.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that doses are done during hours when the student is at home (before school and evenings).

When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably should not be in school for a full day.

Please do not send vitamins, cough medicine, ointments or any type of over the counter medicine to school. It is particularly dangerous to send these in lunch boxes, since a child may inadvertently share these with other children.

We cannot assume responsibility for giving medicine for several reasons. First, our Directors are busy looking out for the welfare of all the children. It is too easy to become busy with the group and forget to give the medication at the proper time. Also, for the safety of all the children, we prefer not to have medication in the classroom.

If this policy presents an extreme hardship to your child, please contact the school and we will try to accommodate your needs. In extreme situations, authorization may be granted from the Administrator to leave medication at the school. Any medication brought to school must be left with the staff in a safe place.

For students with severe allergies, our preference for a student requiring an epi-pen is for them to wear their epi-pen on them at all times in a securely fastened fanny pack for their safety. We require that 2 current epi-pens are provided to the school in the pack, for us to ensure the child's safety should we have to await EMS. We also ask that emergency information and emergency care be written down and placed inside the pack. Parents are responsible for ensuring the pack is labeled, complete and pens have not expired.

Safe Schools Plan: Creating Cultures and Climate of Safety During Emergencies:

The Administrator and Directors will provide leadership during emergencies to provide safety, maintain order, and coordinate with outside safety personnel. Staff will work together to ensure students enter their parent/guardian's care safely as soon as possible.

Media Consideration: When a Safe Schools Plan is in effect, the Administrator is the sole spokesperson for the school and will provide brief, accurate information keeping in mind to respect the privacy of affected individuals.

During a Critical Incident:

- The Administrator will appoint a Record Keeper to track our responses and organize communication with parents/guardians.
- The Administrator will carry out the role of team leader or appoint a Senior Directress to take on this role or part of the role as needed.
- The Team Leader will communicate as the liaison with police, staff, students, community and services as needed and with the Ministry of Education contact (Kevin Gable).

School Closure:

At Brilliant Star Montessori School, we take direction from the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and our school Board makes final decisions with our response plans for catastrophic events, natural disasters and communicable disease pandemics. Our Board will do our best to make safe and wise decisions and communicate as quickly as possible during these situations.

Section 5: Academic Policies

Class Projects, Assignments and Homework in the Elementary Classroom

Brilliant Star may assign some at home projects beginning in the first grade; not page after page of busywork; but meaningful, interesting assignments that expand on the topics that the children are pursuing in class and which invite parents and children to work together.

It is important to encourage your child to complete these assignments with their best effort and care.

We try to challenge children to think, explore, and pursue tangible projects that give them a sense of satisfaction. At-home projects are intended to afford students the opportunity to practice and reinforce skills introduced in the classroom. Moreover, there is a certain degree of self-discipline that can be developed within the growing child through the process of completing assignments independently.

Depending on the child's level, at-home projects normally involve some reading, research, writing, and something tangible to accomplish. Some examples of home assignments are: book reports, research assignments, Science Fair projects, poetry, or investigations. The children will have an assigned period of time to complete the project. Students may share their findings in many different ways to the class.

When possible, the Directors build in opportunities for children to choose among several alternative assignments.

Homework should never become a battleground between adult and child. One of our goals as parents and Directors should be to help the children learn how to get organized, budget time, and follow through until the work is completed. Ideally, home assignments and projects will give parents and children a pleasant opportunity to work together on projects that give both parent and child a sense of accomplishment. They are intended to enrich and extend the curriculum.

Elementary Students will have a weekly spelling test on the last day of the week. We ask parents to practice these words with their child throughout the week. This will ensure confidence on the test day as well as develop these important study skills.

Occasionally, if the child is not completing their required work at school, we may send some work home to be completed. This usually helps to gently remind the student of the expectations during school work times.

Elementary Home Planners

Home Planners: Elementary students each have their own home planner. They are for writing updates about upcoming projects, activities, field trips, special events as well as recording their weekly Spelling words. We ask that each Monday evening, a parent look it over. Planners also have a reading log at the end of the planner to record their reading time during the week.

Parent Observation and Parent/Director Interviews

It is very important for Directors and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress with your child's Director. We ask, however, that you understand that the Director's responsibility during school is to the students. Morning arrival in particular is a very sensitive time when the Directors are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. **Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum.** If you must speak with a Director in the morning, please make communication brief or make arrangements to speak with them at another time. Otherwise, you can correspond via a text or note and the Directors will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed.

December: There are Parent / Director Interviews and Observations for Casa Kindergarten and Elementary students and Observations only for Casa Half Day and Double Session students.

April: There are Parent / Director Interviews and Observations for Casa Kindergarten and Elementary students and Observations only for Casa Half Day and Double Session students.

Additional conferences can be scheduled upon request.

Parent Director Interviews: These are times for parents and Directors to talk about the child's progress in a private room while the children are in the classroom with the assistant.

Parent Observations: Parent observations occur on the Interview days. Parents are invited into the classroom and their child may tour them through the classroom and show them some of their favourite activities. This is an exciting time for the child to share with their parents what they have been working on. To be able to focus on your child, we prefer if younger siblings did not attend.

For Kindergarten and Elementary students: Once the parents have had a chance to observe in the classroom, the parents and the Director will leave to go to another room for their interview. The child may stay in the classroom with an assistant supervisor during this time.

Evaluation of Student Progress

Brilliant Star's Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced and the Directors maintain careful records of each student's academic progress.

Because Montessori Schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades. In Casa, we will send home a review of the Kindergarten students' work, along with comments on the child's development and growth in the Montessori program.

In Elementary, we send home three written assessments throughout the year to review the child's development and discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to their growth.

Standardized Tests

Typically, Brilliant Star students do not take standardized tests at school. If you wish for your child to complete Canadian Achievement Testing, you can speak to the Director to arrange for this testing (at your expense).

Promotion from One Level to the Next

Students at Brilliant Star Montessori do not follow a preset curriculum for each grade level. They proceed at their own pace. As a result, the concept that a child is a first, second, or fourth grader, doesn't have the

same meaning as it would in a traditional school.

At the same time, we realize that children in our culture are accustomed to referring to themselves by their grade level.

Brilliant Star has established expectations for the normal baseline achievement that we expect to see in our students. While they may surpass those standards, they represent a normal index of skills and knowledge that we expect most Montessori students to display. **Students will normally be promoted from Casa to Elementary or one grade level to the next at the end of the school year if they have accomplished the goals and norms that we have established.**

Advancement to the next class level (for example from Casa to the Lower Elementary level) is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional, and physical/motor development. Because the classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless of which group he or she is placed in, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. We always invite parents to work with us in reaching these decisions, and focus on what will be in the child's best interests.

Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.
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Privacy of Student Files

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least 24 hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a Brilliant Star Montessori staff member, and if they disagree with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with their comments.

Officials of the Department of Education may have the right to review student files without the parents' or guardians' permission. However, with a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file without the permission of the student or parent/guardian. In such a case, the school will inform the student and their family in writing that such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent(s), guardian(s), or student if he/she has attained the age of majority, with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

Section 6: Ground Rules

Brilliant Star Montessori's Fundamental Ground Rules

As a school founded on the Montessori ideals and The Virtues Project, we feel every person deserves respect. Brilliant Star Montessori expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, Directors, and staff.

The goal of all Montessori Education is to establish safe, warm, and caring environments within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

When anyone at Brilliant Star Montessori finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about interpersonal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. **Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, is allowed at Brilliant Star Montessori.** If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who on even one occasion, endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the Administrator.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school's values and character. All students are expected to adhere and respect them to protect one another.

Our ground rules are essentially the same at every level of the school, although the language and emphasis changes somewhat for the older student. This is how we explain them to younger students.

Please review these rules with your child:

- We are kind and gentle to one another.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration.
- We respect each other's personal belongings and ask the owner's permission before touching it.
- Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure. Please use your tact and gentleness when discussing hurt or upset feelings with someone else.
- Everyone has the right to be physically safe. Please use your peacefulness and gentleness when playing with others.
- We play cooperatively. We let everyone who wants to play join in your games. Everyone should feel included.
- We use peaceful games, actions and peaceful language.
- Use the playground equipment as intended.
- We play on the grass and play equipment. We stay off the trees, fences, raised gardens or any buildings.
- Please keep sand and sand toys in the sandbox and put the toys away in the toy box when finished.
- Mulch is to be left in the designated areas and out of the sand box, grass and gardens.
- Sand, mulch, rocks, sticks or snow are to remain on the ground.
- Please stay within your Director or Assistant's supervision at all times.
- Please remain in our schoolyard until dismissed by your Director. When the parent arrives at dismissal time, please have your child say goodbye to their Director to dismiss them into your care.
- Play tag and ball games in the designated play areas.
- Please put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.
- Please respect our gardens and save play for other designated areas.

Care of the Environment:

The entire school community (Directors, students, parents and Administrators) is responsible for helping to maintain the order and neatness of the school environment.

- Everyone is expected to help maintain the cleanliness and order of the school.
- If something is spilled, please clean it up right away.
- Everyone is expected to help keep the school litter free by picking up any trash or belongings that you find strewn around. Do not throw trash on the ground, indoor or out.
- Students are expected to help with the daily cleanup in their class areas.

All our ground rules can be summed up in our 3 Principle Ground Rules:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Respect Yourself2. Respect Others3. Respect our Environment |
|---|

Fire Drills

The Administrator will conduct fire drills throughout the year. The fire drills are discussed prior to practicing as to ensure the children leave safely and calmly. Students are well prepared for what occurs during our fire drills. We call these 'drills' because we try to exit the school as safely and quickly as possible.

- When the bell rings, all classes will dismiss into their designated areas and remain in their groups. Directors will ensure all children are accounted for before the class leaves the school building.
- One of the assistants will make certain the room is empty and close the doors.
- Directors will carry emergency backpacks with registration forms, medication and emergency materials.

- Both Casa and Elementary staff will take a school cell phone for communication when necessary.
- Students and staff are expected to remain grouped in the designated area until role call is completed and they are informed that they may return to class.

Section 7: Financial Policies

Tuition Policies

Brilliant Star Montessori is dependent on tuition for income. Student accounts must be kept up-to-date. The school will be forced to withhold any and all services to students whose accounts have fallen behind. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

Report cards cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account. Report cards will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

Trials for New Students:

There will be a trial for all new students for up to 10 school days at the Director's discretion. During this time, Directors will assess the child's readiness and level of development. The Director will inform the parents how the trial is going and determine if the student is ready for enrolment. If the Director concludes the child is not ready for enrolment at that time, they will notify the parents within the two-week school period. If the trial is not successful, we will refund the last half of the monthly tuition and all post-dated tuition cheques as well as the activity fee (if paid). The registration fee and supply fees are non-refundable.

Re-enrollment

Invitations to continue at Brilliant Star Montessori are normally automatic, but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the Administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the perfect match between the student, home, and school.

Re-enrollment material will be sent home in January and is due back at the school by January 15th along with the annual application fee, supply fee and post-dated tuition cheques. If the school has not received a student's re-enrollment material by January 15th, his or her space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school. No student may re-enroll if there is an outstanding balance

remaining on his or her account.

Elementary Grade Level Capacity and Acceptance

The total number of students permitted into the Elementary classroom may not be more than 16. This is an application process and every attempt will be made to notify parents of acceptance by the end January each year.

Late Fees and NSF Cheques

If a payment is late, Brilliant Star Montessori School will charge a late fee of 2% per month. Report cards will not be sent home until balances are paid. There will be a \$20 charge for all NSF cheques.

Extra Care fees are due by the 10th of the next month. If fees are not paid by the 15th, we will charge a \$20 late fee to cover extra Administrative costs.

Visiting Students:

From time to time, we may have a student who was once enrolled in our school visit us. We enjoy getting to see our old friends and welcome them to come visit. Please contact the school in advance to check when it is a good day and time for a visit. If a student is visiting for a full day, we will charge a fee of \$50 per day.

Tuition Increases:

Due to inflation rates of school supplies and pay increments for our staff, tuition prices will most likely increase slightly each year. When our Board re-evaluates the tuition prices each year, we compare our prices with other Montessori schools and daycare providers in the city to ensure we are well within the average reasonable price range.

Refunds and Withdrawals:

NOTE: Once registered, the prepaid application fee, supply fee, activity fee, and the first month's tuition for the upcoming school year are non-

refundable. A written notice to withdraw a child from the Brilliant Star Montessori School Corp. must be given. Such written notice of withdrawal shall be delivered to the school Administrator.

* Please note that there are no refunds due to a mandated school closure. All efforts to move toward a distance learning program as quickly as possible in the interim will be implemented.

CASA Withdrawals occurring before Sept. 1st:

Once registered, failure to provide written notice by April 30th for the upcoming school year, will also result in the second and third month's tuition cheques being retained by the Brilliant Star Montessori School Corp.

CASA Withdrawals occurring after Sept. 1st:

- A. A minimum of three months' notice prior to withdrawal is required. If three months' notice is not given, we maintain the right to retain said three months of tuition.
- B. Where applicable, refunds will be issued on the last day of the third month when three month's written notice of withdrawal is made in accordance with this Agreement.
- C. No refunds will be issued under any circumstances for withdrawals that occur after Feb. 1st of the given school year.
- D. No refunds will be issued in the situation where staffing may change. The Board ensures that a quality of education will be maintained no matter whomever is directing our programs.

ELEMENTARY Withdrawals:

Once registered, there will be no refunds for fees and/or tuition UNLESS that spot can be filled by another Elementary student. If the spot can be filled, refunds will be in accordance with A-D as stated above.

Section 8: Parents and the School

Brilliant Star Montessori — A Community Built on Trust, Friendship and Mutual Respect

Once, we developed a sense of community simply because we lived together in the same town or neighbourhood. Today, we may only know a handful of our neighbours. Our friends, and, more importantly, our children's friends, move out of one neighborhood to another, or even out of town as our careers dictate. Those of us who cherish the old sense of close-knit community have to create our own by joining together with people with whom we share similar interests, concerns, and values.

This opportunity for continuity, stability, and a true sense of community within the school means a great deal to us at Brilliant Star Montessori. Students know that they belong, that they are respected, and that they are cared for not only by their parents, but by the larger community of fellow students, staff, and other families in the school.

Brilliant Star Montessori brings together families who have chosen to identify with a common commitment to the shared concerns, values, and expectations they have for their children. We come from different backgrounds, but our sense of community exists in spite of, or perhaps because of it. Brilliant Star Montessori teaches our children to understand, respect, and appreciate cultural differences and shared human values: peace, independence, human dignity, and a celebration of life.

In a time when it is often difficult to establish the same positive feelings of continuity, unification, and stability in our own neighborhoods, Brilliant Star Montessori strives to re-create a positive sense of identity, mutual caring, trustworthiness and concern among its students, staff, and families.

Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent

One of the most valuable contributions that families make to Brilliant Star Montessori is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the school, assisting with classroom programs such as cooking, helping with special projects or fundraisers, guest speaking, or helping care for our school yard.

Parents and grandparents who give of their time and talent share with their family special memories and experiences that last well beyond their years at school.

A few ways in which you can help out at Brilliant Star Montessori:

- Help with yard work
- Lend your time and support to our fund-raising efforts
- Help out with our 'library' book inventory and carding
- Volunteer for the Elementary Reading Program
- Serve on our Star Community Builders team
- Help the Directors organize field trips or special lessons
- Volunteer at special events, such as International Children's Festival
- Help organize and prepare hot lunch days
- Share your talents and special interests, such as a musical instrument that you play, a second language that you speak, a craft that you enjoy, or a field that you've studied

Brilliant Star Montessori depends on our combined talents.

Yard Work: One of the areas we look to our families for help is service with our school yard. We value the sense of community this opportunity provides our families. Each family is given two weeks for yard work care per child that is registered. However, we understand that sometimes our family schedules are busy and we are not always able to volunteer in this area. If you are not able to work your designated weeks, you are welcome to trade weeks with another family or "buy out" at \$40 per week for us to hire someone else to do it. We would like to gather some names of individuals or families who would be interested in working these additional weeks and earning this amount. **Please let us know if you are interested in working additional weeks for hire or know someone who is interested.**

Our school yard is part of the beautiful environment for the children and our yard is very valuable to the full Montessori experience. We hope to continue to build a sense of community, yet allow families who are not able to volunteer, a chance to contribute to the overall maintenance of our school yard.

Star Community Builders

The Star Community Builders is a group comprised of Brilliant Star Montessori's parents, staff, Board representatives, and interested students. Each member of our school community is encouraged to become a Star Community Builder. The mandate of this group is to build community within our school. Participants will gain a much deeper understanding of the school's mission, strengths, and the issues that challenge it. Many of us treasure the opportunity to have a direct voice in the life of the school.

This group will meet on an 'as needed basis' and offers the opportunity to explore issues of community building and fundraising to improve our school programming and beautify our classroom and outdoor environment. Please let us know if you are interested to lend a hand as a Star Community Builder.

School Board

Brilliant Star Montessori School's Board of Directors work closely with the school's Administration and teaching staff to plan and coordinate specific programs and special events, create and oversee all necessary school policies and ensures the safety of all members of the school.

Board members should reflect the particular blend of skills, expertise, perspectives, energy, and enthusiasm best suited to the goals of Brilliant Star Montessori School.

Communication Between Home and School

During the school year, the school will send home letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements through emails. To maintain our environmentally green commitment, we will try to send most of our updates and monthly newsletters by email to all registered families. If you prefer to have a paper copy of our emails, please let us know and we can print a copy for you.

Administrative Policy 152

Please see Appendix A on page 55 for contact information for student and parent grievances.

Communication with Second Families

Whenever parents are separated, divorced, or for some other reason not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters.

- Copies of progress reports and announcements will be emailed out or sent home to both parents.
- Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents.
- When Parent-Director conferences are scheduled, the Directors should not be asked to conduct separate conferences for each parent. We need to communicate the same message to both parents at the same time, as this experience can never be exactly duplicated. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the school to discuss the situation.
- Both parents are equally welcomed at all school events.
- Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.

Parent Observations

Parent Observations occur twice throughout the year, one in November/December and one in April. Parents are invited into the classroom and the child may tour the parents through the classroom and show them some of their favourite activities. This is an exciting time for the child to share with their parents what they have been working on. To be able to focus on the child, we prefer if younger siblings did not attend. For Kindergarten and Elementary students, once the parents have had a chance to observe in the classroom, the parents and the Director will leave to go to another room for their interview. The child may stay in the classroom with an Assistant supervisor during this time.

So, What Did You Do at School Today?

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question? Did you get the common answer, 'Nothing'? Or possibly they tell you every day that they did the same thing, such as play- dough or spooning beans. Don't be alarmed. We can assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support his or her development.

Young children often have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They have done so many things that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes they don't remember the names of the materials that they used, such as the Binomial cube, the Metal Insets, or the Addition Strip Board.

In addition to the difficulty children may have talking about their school experience, you may have noted that not many papers come home. They can be doing sensorial activities, complex Math, word building, writing in a sand tray or on chalkboards, working with continent puzzle maps, and Science lessons, all with manipulative materials that will have no paper work to show you their progress.

So how can you find out what your child is doing in school?

1. Ask your child questions that are more specific. "Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build a tower or work with sounds?"
2. Sign up for a family observation time in November and March.
3. Read a Montessori book.
4. Stop in after school and have a brief talk to your child's Director, or set up an appointment for a formal conference if you prefer.
- 5. Come to Parent workshops that we offer.**
6. Be patient. In time, it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning every day.

"Joy is the indication of internal growth." Maria Montessori

Montessori Education

On our website, we provide Montessori information on various topics. Please visit our website for more information on the Montessori philosophy and education. We will offer parent workshops on various Montessori topics and The Virtues Project throughout the year. **We strongly encourage your participation at all Parent workshops.**

Website

We have a school website with various information on:

- Montessori philosophy
- School Programs
- Staff
- Tuition
- Registration
- Camps
- Contact Information
- Sponsors
- Parent Handbook

Please feel free to view our website periodically to keep updated on these areas.

Our Sponsors:

We are so appreciative of the generous support and donations from each of our sponsors and rely on these supports to enhance our school and keep our tuition costs down! **If your family or business would like to become a sponsor, please let us know!**

APPENDIX A: CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS.**Background**

Students and parents from Independent Schools have access to a number of supports provided by the provincial government. While not a comprehensive list, the services listed below are important resources students and parents can access if they have concerns or challenges.

School Contact Information:

Principal:		Telephone:		Email:	
School Director:		Telephone:		Email:	
Board Chair:		Telephone:		Email:	
Website:					

Ministry of Education: Program Branch (Director of Independent Schools) – has responsibility for the supervision and administration of Independent Schools in Saskatchewan.

Telephone: 1-306-787-5186

Email: programsed@gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth – an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan – leads a team of professionals to advocate for the rights, interests, and well-being of children and youth in Saskatchewan.

Website: <http://www.saskadvocate.ca>

Telephone: 1-800-322-7221 or 1-306-933-6700

Email: contact@saskadvocate.ca

Kids Help Phone – a confidential 24/7 mental health service that provides mental health tips and information, crisis support, and professional counseling.

Website: <https://kidshelpphone.ca>

Telephone: 1-800-668-6868

Text: 686868

Healthline 811 – a confidential 24-hour health, mental health, and addictions advice, education, and support line available to anyone in Saskatchewan

Telephone: 811

Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board – responsible for certification of Saskatchewan teachers and maintaining standards of conduct and competence.

Website: <http://sptrb.ca>

Telephone: 1-844-254-2230 (toll-free) or 1-306-352-2230

Email: general@sptrb.ca