

## **WELCOME**

---

The Head of School, Administration, and staff of Gatehouse Montessori School extend a warm welcome to new students, returning students and their families. Each family is encouraged to become an active member of our community. In taking on this role we encourage parents to interact with other parents, the children, the teachers and by attending coffee/tea mornings, school functions, fieldtrips or activities involving the Gatehouse Parent Committee. This group is made up of parents who are interested in being involved in activities and events taking place throughout the school year. Coffee/tea social mornings take place once a month immediately after morning drop-off.

This Parent Handbook will be your guide to Gatehouse Montessori School, by answering questions you may have and assisting you in understanding how the school functions.

Please direct all questions or suggestions for the handbook to the Head of School.

Gretchen van Nostrand  
Head of School

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNDERSTANDING MONTESSORI .....	3	RECESS.....	22
HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL.....	5	BIRTHDAYS AND CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS .....	22
THE BOARD .....	5	FIELD TRIPS.....	22
GATEHOUSE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION.....	5	EMERGENCY PLAN PROCEDURES .....	23
BELIEFS AND VALUES.....	6	DONATIONS AND FUNDRAISING.....	24
HOURS OF OPERATION .....	7	CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY .....	25
FEES AND SCHOOL CHARGES .....	8		
ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES .....	9		
INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSING .....	9		
DAILY ROUTINE.....	10		
GRADUAL ENTRY.....	11		
KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM THE CRUCIAL THIRD YEAR.....	13		
SPECIALIST PROGRAMS .....	14		
ART .....	14		
FRENCH .....	14		
MUSIC.....	14		
GYM .....	14		
LIBRARY POLICY.....	14		
GATEHOUSE GUIDELINES.....	15		
PARENT COMMUNICATION .....	16		
HELPFUL INFORMATION TO SHARE .....	16		
BI-WEEKLY BULLETIN .....	16		
STUDENT EVALUATIONS.....	17		
PARENT OBSERVATIONS .....	17		
ABSENCES.....	18		
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.....	18		
HEAD LICE .....	18		
SAFETY .....	18		
ADMINISTERING MEDICATION .....	18		
ALLERGY AWARENESS.....	19		
SECURITY .....	20		
CLASS PHOTOS .....	21		
CLOTHING.....	21		
TOYS.....	21		
SNACKS.....	21		
LUNCHES .....	21		

## **UNDERSTANDING MONTESSORI**

---

The Montessori approach is based on the natural laws of human development. Maria Montessori observed that children under the age of six absorb limitlessly and effortlessly from the world around them and, in doing so, lay down foundations for later life. She identified certain windows of opportunity – she called them ‘sensitive periods’ – when the child is irresistibly drawn to the things he needs to help him develop. Everything in the classroom is designed to support these windows of opportunity. The Montessori preschool is called the Children’s House because everything in it is designed to allow the child to become independent. The materials are child-sized, and the equipment, which is aesthetically pleasing and meticulously cared for, is laid out in an orderly fashion on low shelves that are easily accessible.

### **BENEFITS OF MIXED AGE**

Children between the ages of three to six are grouped together. The younger children learn from watching the older children and the older ones benefit by role modeling and helping the younger ones. The mixed ages allow the children to develop socially, intellectually and emotionally. This is an essential aspect of any Montessori school.

### **BUILDING CONCENTRATION AND CO-ORDINATION**

The curriculum is designed to give the children the opportunity to practice everyday skills and to help them develop concentration and co-ordination of mind and body. The sensory materials make the most of the fact that children use their senses to learn. Through practice and perfection of these materials the children learn to discriminate, order and classify the physical properties of the world they live in. The child under six has a great capacity for mental absorption. The Montessori prepared environment allows the child to explore the didactic materials freely on their own initiative. This freedom has responsibilities attached to it, as grace and courtesy is an important skill in our environments. The teachers respond to the needs of the individual child, giving lessons when appropriate. The child happily makes creative choices and repeats activities in order to reinforce their knowledge of the materials. This strengthens concentration and social skills so necessary in the classroom.

### **CURRICULUM**

Activities in the Practical Life area of the classroom set the child up for success when taking care of their classroom, themselves and socially. Grace and Courtesy is discussed and encouraged at all times. Small and gross motor movements are strengthened through the use of activities in this area as well. The activities in the Sensorial area develop and enrich all five senses, which in turn heightens the child’s experiences while at school and at home. The materials for Math help the children develop an understanding of mathematical concepts in a concrete way. Activities designed to prepare the children for reading and writing are presented to the child from the start of their life in the classroom. Geography, history, biology, botany, zoology, art and music are covered through a hands-on approach based on the fact that children learn most effectively from their own experiences, personal and purposeful.

### **BUILDING INDEPENDENCE**

In a Montessori school, you will see children choosing activities independently and moving from one activity to the next, always returning their chosen activity to the shelf after use. There is an atmosphere of calm and responsibility as the child is observed concentrating for surprising periods of time. The children work individually, in a group or with a friend. Groups arise spontaneously rather than at a fixed time. Maria Montessori observed that this unfettered period of time was essential to the development of concentration you see when the child becomes totally involved in their task at hand..

## **ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

Observation of the child by the teacher is ongoing in a Montessori environment. The child is guided by a trained Montessori teacher who presents an activity to the child when he/she shows they are ready. If the child is practicing with an activity, the teacher will not interfere as long as the child is working with the materials productively. When a difficulty arises, she will note this and represent that activity to the child the next day, or step in and give help, while being careful never to give more help than is necessary. Often, another child will help the very response that Dr. Montessori would want to observe. Children work at their own pace and naturally develop their own rhythm. Since everything that takes place in the classroom is preparation for a later activity, the child is able to move gradually through the activities, developing his skills. The 'directress' is not teaching the child; she is putting him in charge of his own learning through his own exploration – another key part of the Montessori approach.

## **SELECTING A MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

In a true Montessori school, like Gatehouse, you will find a pleasant, calm and well organized environment where all of the materials and furniture are designed specifically to "fit" children 3-5 years of age. The classroom is usually divided into specific areas, where the child can work on the following skills: practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language and cultural subjects. The child knows where to find the materials he/she needs as everything has a place, and there is a place for everything. The classroom is specifically designed to encourage the child to work and think independently. In a Montessori classroom, you will find children who enjoy working independently and who are "absorbed" in their learning. You will see children who have learnt how to explore and solve problems themselves and who work cooperatively with one another

## **HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL**

---

Gatehouse Montessori School was established in 1979 by Jill Royall who was the proprietor of the school until 1988. In 1986, the school became the Gatehouse Montessori School Society, a non-profit organization incorporated under the Societies' Act of British Columbia. It is also a registered charity.

For many years, the school operated out of Cypress Park School in lower Caulfield, which was leased from the West Van School District. In 1998, the School District reopened Cypress Park Elementary School, and we were forced to find a new location. Finding space for a school our size was not easy. Fortunately, the North Shore Jewish Community Centre, and Congregation Har El had been built, and had the space to accommodate us. As always, the school remains non-denominational.

## **THE BOARD**

---

Our society is run by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of no more than nine individuals drawn from past and present parents, as well as the community at large. The Head of School also sits on the board. One parent/guardian of each registered student is considered a member of the Society, as long as they are a resident of British Columbia.

As members of the society, parents are encouraged to attend our Annual General Meeting, normally held during the Fall at the school. At the AGM, the Board of Directors is officially elected and the Society presents its financial statements for the prior fiscal year. This is an excellent opportunity for Gatehouse parents to learn more about how the school is operated and to have input.

## **GATEHOUSE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

---

The Gatehouse Parents' Association, a group of interested and supportive parents, meet once a month at the school immediately following drop-off. We encourage all parents to attend these meetings when we share ideas on parenting, the activities in the classrooms etc.

## **BELIEFS AND VALUES**

---

At Gatehouse Montessori we have strong believe in the following values:

- Offering a safe, secure and nurturing community
- Encouraging a peaceful, courteous and socially aware person
- Building a strong sense of community for each person, with open honest communication
- Awakening the child's spirit and imagination
- Helping children develop self-confidence as independent self-motivated learners
- Helping children learn to observe, question, and explore ideas
- Offering a well maintained Montessori environment

## HOURS OF OPERATION

---

### SCHOOL HOURS

Monday to Friday  
Preschool Children      8:30 a.m.      to      11:30 a.m.  
Extended Day Children      8:30 a.m.      to      2:00 p.m.  
Full-Day Kindergarten      8:30 a.m.      to      3:00 p.m.

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday to Friday      8:00 a.m.      to      4:00 p.m.

The school administrator is in the office each day. If she is unavailable when you call, please leave a message on the voicemail. Messages are picked up on a regular basis.

Gatehouse Montessori School  
1305 Taylor Way  
West Vancouver, BC V7T 2Y7  
Tel: 604-925-1437  
Fax: 604-925-1487  
Email: [gretchen@gatehousemontessori.com](mailto:gretchen@gatehousemontessori.com)

## **FEES AND SCHOOL CHARGES**

---

Please see our website at [www.gatehousemontessori.com/fees.htm](http://www.gatehousemontessori.com/fees.htm) for our most current fee schedule.

Annual fee increases are at minimum 2% above the rate of inflation, and allow the school to continue to develop its programs and maintain competitive salaries and benefits. Please note that to reserve a spot for your child for the upcoming year, we required post dated cheques to be returned with your application.

Parents are reminded that no reduction will be made to tuition fees due to a child's absence because of illness (colds, flu, etc.) or vacations taken during school time.

Parents are reminded that students are enrolled for the entire school year. In the event that the parents must withdraw a child from the school (due to illness as certified by two medical practitioners or the family moving from the North Shore), the Board of Directors must receive written notification as described in the Parent Contract. Parents should understand that vacancies are difficult to fill during the school year and that staffing levels are determined by expected enrolment numbers. Please review the Parent Contract regarding refunds or reimbursements of tuition.

## **ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

---

### **ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL**

- Please bring your child directly into the school. If you arrive early, you are welcome to wait in the library until the classroom door is open at 8:30 am.
- Please accompany your child to the classroom where the teacher will greet him/her at the door.
- The teachers are busy each morning greeting the children. If you have something you want to discuss with the teacher please hand her a note and you will be contacted that day.

### **DISMISSAL FROM SCHOOL**

- Parents are to pick up their child at the classroom door after he/she has said good-bye to the teacher.
- If there are any changes to your usual pick-up arrangements, please inform the teachers by note when dropping off your child, or by calling the school.
- Please be prompt when picking up your child. It is upsetting for many children when a parent is late for pick-up.
- At the beginning of the school year we will ask you to document those persons who have permission to pick up your child from school.
- **No child will be released to a person not previously approved by a parent.**

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSING**

---

One of your child's teachers will call you on the morning of a school closure before 7:30 am. You are also asked to listen to News1130 AM on your radio as telephones and cell phones may not be working. Keeping the office informed when telephone and cell numbers or addresses change is really important.

## DAILY ROUTINE

---

- 8:30 - 8:50** • Welcome by the teacher at the classroom door
- 8:50 - 11:00** • Independent working time-  
• Presentation of activities by the teacher to individual children or small groups  
• Individual snack time (children are encouraged to select and often prepare their own snack items provided by the school)  
• French class is 30 minutes once per week  
• Music class is 45 minutes once per week
- 11:00 - 11:30** • Outside play time (depending on weather)  
• Clean-up/put away activities  
• Circle time: songs, stories, cultural activities,  
• Birthday celebrations etc.
- 11:30** Dismissal of pre-school children by the teacher at the classroom door
- 11:30 - 12:00** Lunchtime in the classroom
- 12:00 - 12:30** Recess for Kindergarten and Extended Day outside
- 12:30 - 2:00** Extended Day Program
- 12:30 - 3:00** Kindergarten Program

All greeting and dismissals take place by your child's teacher(s) at the classroom door

## **GRADUAL ENTRY**

---

**Licensing requires that all children be toilet trained prior to entering our program**

### **GRADUAL ENTRY**

Starting preschool, or moving from one school to another, can be a stressful event for most children. At Gatehouse, we believe that a carefully planned gradual entry will assist you and your child to:

- feel comfortable at the school
- begin to build a trusting relationship with the staff
- experience a positive start at Gatehouse

### **GRADUAL ENTRY STEPS:**

- The child and parents are invited to come in to the classroom individually to meet the teacher before school officially begins. The teacher will call you to set-up this visit.

Our goal is to have the child attending regular hours as soon as he/she is able. Our gradual entry program is typically two to three days in length. On some occasions, depending on the individual child, gradual entry may need to be lengthened.

## **EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM**

---

Children who are 4 years old in September can register in our extended-day program. After the regular pre-school session ends at 11:30, the children enjoy lunch time in the classroom, followed by a supervised playtime with their friends.

From 12:30 – 2:00 students participate in a program which continues building their foundation through the use of the Montessori materials. Art, creativity, music, drama and an introduction to Mandarin are also offered. Our pre-school students who are four years of age and demonstrate an ability and interest in having a longer day should participate in this program. Parents can meet with the child's teacher to assess the suitability of their child's participation in this program.

Parents can chose the five day or three day (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) program.

## **KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM THE CRUCIAL THIRD YEAR**

---

The importance of our full-day kindergarten program is immeasurable. During the first half of the day, the Kindergarten children join the 3 and 4-year-old preschoolers in the classroom. This is an ideal opportunity for the Kindergarten children to use their skills as 'leaders' in the classroom and to feel a sense of accomplishment when helping the new and younger students adapt. All the activities and experiences the Kindergarten children had during their Montessori preschool years come together and they are now the role models.

After the morning session, the kindergarten children join in a separate classroom where they are taught by a specialist Kindergarten and Montessori trained teacher. The children spend two-and-a-half hours working on activities such as:

Addition	Sentence building
Subtraction	Journal writing
Multiplication	Fine arts
Division	Science
Sight words	Geography
Phonograms	The natural world

They also enjoy music and French lessons once a week, taught by specialist teachers, as well as a gym program twice a week.

The kindergarten program at Gatehouse is governed by The British Columbia Ministry of Education, Independent Schools and meets the BC kindergarten curriculum requirements. The Montessori program goes well beyond the Ministry's requirements.

Our goal is to help children become self-motivated, curious, enthusiastic learners. We offer a well-rounded program encompassing academics, fine and gross motor activities, French, music and fine arts.

Our program and materials have been carefully structured as a three year program which coincides with the crucial development of children ages 3-6. Each individual year, although important in itself, is at the same time part of a whole. A child who is withdrawn from the Montessori program before the completion of the three year cycle will be at a disadvantage in terms of meeting their potential. The child at the end of their second year may be writing and perhaps on the verge of reading.

When they continue working with the carefully developed Montessori materials in a familiar environment, these skills develop at an impressive rate. It is this continuity that children crave. The third year child is ready for all of the more advanced materials in the math, language and cultural areas. As well, this is a child in the position of leadership.

## **SPECIALIST PROGRAMS**

---

### **ART**

Art is part of the culture curriculum in the classrooms. Painting, drawing, exploration of various media, decoration of academic work, and crafts are introduced and worked on by the children, often, the life and work of a particular artist will be explored and studied.

### **FRENCH**

Children receive French as introduction to a second language. The program emphasis is placed on developing vocabulary and pronunciation through reception of words and songs.

### **MUSIC**

In addition to music at the circle time each morning, the children participate in a music program on a weekly basis. This program consists of singing, movement, the language of music, and the playing of various instruments.

### **GYM**

All kindergarten children participate in a gym program two or three times a week just before lunch.

## **LIBRARY POLICY**

---

The library at school can be visited each morning before class, or after picking-up your child at the end of their day.

As the teachers are upstairs in their lunch area from 11:45 – 12:30, just above the library, they would appreciate parents and children leaving the library by 11:45am. Food and drinks should be consumed away from the library area. This sets a good example for the children.

Books can be read and looked at in the Library. It is a resource for classroom use and books from the library remain in the school.

## **GATEHOUSE GUIDELINES**

---

At Gatehouse Montessori School, we follow the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori which emphasized the importance of recognizing each aspect of the child's life emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually; the whole child. Dr. Montessori observed that when the child is actively working with their hands, refining and educating their senses, they develop concentration, self-awareness, and positive social interaction skills. She observed that as social beings, humans need to develop feelings of belonging to a community.

The freedom of the children is limited only by the needs of the group and by safety concerns. In the classroom, we strive to develop guidelines that are minimal and clear. We demonstrate and emphasize "how to do" rather than "how not to do". At circle- time, and when appropriate, the child learns problem-solving skills. The teachers continue to present and develop lessons in Grace and Courtesy throughout the school year. Often, the input of the older children naturally occurs when the class is discussing issues that arise.

Parents should familiarize themselves with the guidelines at Gatehouse, as itemized in this Parent Handbook, and discuss these with their child. Should disciplinary difficulties arise, parents may then review them with their child. Some of the strategies we may intervene with include:

- Actively listening to the child
- Helping the child with problem solving through conflict resolution strategies
- Offering choices when appropriate
- Redirecting the child's attention to other activities
- Reviewing the limit or guideline
- Without endangering the health or safety of the child, allowing natural or logical consequences to occur
- Limiting the use of the activity in use.

If at any time a child is particularly aggressive, and we feel it necessary to protect the other children in the group, the following steps will be taken:

- Every attempt will be made by the teacher to assist the child in successfully overcoming the difficulty.
- If the difficulty continues, parents will be informed and a meeting will be arranged between the appropriate parties.
- If necessary, after meetings with parents and with the parents' permission, a professional from North Shore Health Services or an independent Psychologist will be asked to observe the child in an effort to assist staff with appropriate management strategies.
- If all possible efforts have been attempted, and staff feel the child's behaviour is sufficiently negatively impacting the other children and the program a request will be made for the removal of the child from the program.

## **PARENT COMMUNICATION**

---

The Head of School may be contacted at any time by email, phone or at drop-off or pick-up times. Please feel free to discuss any concerns you may have including:

- School guidelines
- Questions about fees
- Questions about hours drop-off/pick-up times
- Daily absences ( a note is required for kindergarten students)
- Safety issues

Gatehouse has two parent/teacher conferences per year. If you need to discuss your child at any other time, please make an appointment with the teacher. We feel strongly that it is inappropriate to confer with the teachers in the presence of the child (at drop-off or pick-up time). Please make an appointment for before or after school, when someone is able to watch your child.

### **HELPFUL INFORMATION TO SHARE**

In the event that a significant event occurs in your child's life, please consider informing your child's teachers and or the Head of School. Such conversations are strictly confidential. Examples may include:

- Moving
- A death in the family
- Separation of parents
- Sleeping/eating/bedwetting problems
- A new baby
- A new caregiver
- The death of a pet
- Parental absences

The teacher will keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment, which may affect your child as well.

### **BI-WEEKLY BULLETIN**

Twice a month, a Bulletin will be emailed to each family keeping you informed of events at school. A paper copy of each Bulletin is available on the notice board.

- Please check the bulletin boards on a regular basis.
- Please check your school calendar regularly to keep abreast of school events and closures.
- Please check email regularly as school Bulletins and information are sent via email. When you have any email address changes please inform the office right away.

**STUDENT EVALUATIONS**

Gatehouse has developed a report card for kindergarten students. The teachers keep track of presentations given to each child noting the activities the child is working on, as well as those activities mastered. Kindergarten parents will receive their child's report card and prior to the parent conferences in May.

**PARENT OBSERVATIONS**

Parents will have an opportunity to observe in their child's class in November or May. In the week following the observation, interviews with the teachers are set-up after school. Sign-up sheets will be posted outside classroom doors.

## **ABSENCES**

---

The school should be informed of the reason for absenteeism. Please let us know if your child is absent due to illness or if you are going on vacation etc. Kindergarten students must provide a written note explaining all absences, even for one day. If the absence is due to illness, please be specific in the nature of the illness as this allows the staff to track these incidents throughout the school.

## **COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

---

Provincial regulations specify that any child who comes to school with a communicable disease should be sent home immediately. A child should be kept home from school if there is any question of communicable illness. For the safety of the other children, and to comply with public health regulations, parents must report contagious diseases or serious illness to the school within 24 hours of a diagnosis so a note can be posted to inform other parents. Children with suspected or known measles, mumps, rubella or chickenpox must not attend school until non-infectious. Guidelines are available in the event of your child contracting any of these illnesses. When your child has a fever, it is expected that they will remain at home until they are free of the fever.

## **HEAD LICE**

Parents are required to notify the school as soon as head lice have been detected so that the school community can be notified. Children with head lice will be asked to go home for a treatment. When no live eggs (nits) are on the hair, the child may return to school. Be sure that the head is checked upon their return. A second treatment 7 days after the first must take place. Head lice checks will take periodically throughout the school year. Parents are asked to check their child's head, especially after traveling.

## **SAFETY**

---

When a child receives minor injuries at school, an incident report is filled out and a copy is given to the parent.

- If it is a head injury, the parent is always contacted, even if the injury is deemed a minor one.
- If the school feels the injury is serious enough to have the child seen by a doctor, the parent is notified immediately.
- If the injury requires emergency treatment, 911 is called and the parent is notified immediately.

It is important that you keep the school informed of any changes to your emergency and alternate contact information.

## **ADMINISTERING MEDICATION**

---

If you would like the staff of Gatehouse to administer prescription medication to your child, Child Care Licensing Regulations require that the medication be provided in the original container and a Medication Consent form be completed with instructions on administering the medication. All medication will be stored in a locked container.

## **ALLERGY AWARENESS**

---

### **ALLERGY POLICY**

Gatehouse Montessori School will provide a healthy learning environment for the students and staff by working with families and community health care professionals to ensure as safe an environment as possible to minimize the risk of an allergic reaction.

### **ALLERGY PROCEDURES**

#### **INFORMATION AND AWARENESS**

- Medical Alert Plan will be created following a consult with the staff, parents, and a Public Health Nurse
- Consent forms to administer epinephrine on file (as per ADMINISTERING MEDICATION section of this handbook)
- Identified the anaphylactic child to all staff
- Personal allergy alert forms identifying the anaphylactic child put up in the affected classroom and in common areas
- Instructions on use of auto injector put up in the affected classroom and in common areas
- Annual information sharing session in place for the school community

#### **TRAINING IN USE OF AUTO INECTOR PROVIDED FOR**

- Teaching staff
- Non teaching staff
- Substitute teachers

#### **AVOIDANCE**

- Lunchroom and eating area practices established
- Procedures for holidays and special celebrations established

#### **EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

- Emergency plan on file for each anaphylactic student
- Rapid communication strategy in place (call 911 and notify parents immediately)
- Auto-injectors stored in safe and accessible location
- Annual review process in place including replacing expired epinephrine pens

#### **SAFE LUNCH ROOM AND EATING AREA PRACTICES**

- At-risk students are required to eat only food brought from their home
- An allergen aware non-isolated eating area is provided for the at-risk students
- Students are advised not to trade or share food, food utensils, and food containers
- Eating surfaces are thoroughly cleaned with a grease-cutting detergent and then dried
- Staff and students should wash their hands before and after eating

## **SECURITY**

---

In order to monitor persons entering school, the front door of the school is locked at all times other than drop off and pick up. When the door is unlocked, it is supervised by a staff member.

As noted in the Arrivals and Departures section of this handbook, no child will be released to a person not previously approved by a parent. Any person picking up a child must be prepared to show identification if requested by a staff member.

Please note that you may be on camera when entering and exiting the school.

## **CLASS PHOTOS**

---

Class photos are taken in the Fall of each year and packages are available by the end of November. The exact date will be made available early in the school year.

## **CLOTHING**

---

As the Montessori classroom stresses independence, it is important that all school clothing be easy for children to manage by themselves (undressing and dressing for trips to the bathroom). All children should have a pair of non-skid indoor shoes to be left at school. Each child is also asked to bring a labeled change of clothing that includes a change of underwear, socks, pants and a top. These items will be stored in individual boxes provided by the school. Lost articles labeled with the child's name will be returned.

## **TOYS**

---

Toys should remain at home. Please assure your child that his/her toys are for home use and that at school he/she has exciting activities and friends to work with. Sharing a book or a natural and educational object such as a shell with others in the class is encouraged.

## **SNACKS**

---

Gatehouse offers nutritious snacks to the children. Fruits, vegetables, cheese and crackers etc are delivered to the school each week by "Organics @ Home" which is a local company. The school also provides freshly filtered water.

Gatehouse leases space from the North Shore Jewish Community Centre, thus food brought into the classrooms must be kosher. All fruits and vegetables are kosher. Absolutely no meat or meat products are allowed in the school. Seafood is permitted.

## **LUNCHES**

---

Children in the Extended-Day and Full-Day Kindergarten programs bring lunch from home and eat in their classroom while supervised by a teacher. Parents are asked to provide nutritious lunches and to be aware of the allergy policy outlined in the Allergy Awareness section of this handbook.

Parents are asked to keep the portions suitable for their child's age level. Fruits and vegetables should be cut into bite-sized pieces and small containers of milk or juice should be provided. Large drinking boxes are unsuitable for young children. Foods such as chocolate bars, potato chips, and candies, which are high in sugar content and/or artificial additives, should not be included in their lunches. In order to contribute to a cleaner environment, we ask that parents pack their child's food and drink in re-useable containers.

## **RECESS**

---

Children in the Extended-Day and Full-Day Kindergarten programs have 30 minutes of supervised recess each day. Parents are asked to be aware of the weather forecast and to send their children with clothing appropriate for the day. If children are well enough to be at school, they should be well enough to go outside. Please speak with the Head of School if you feel an exception should be made.

## **BIRTHDAYS AND CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS**

---

Birthdays and celebrations are a welcome event in the classroom. In the Montessori environment, we celebrate a child's birthday in a very special way. During group time, close to the end of the morning or afternoon session, the birthday child carries the globe around a large symbol of the sun. He/she walks around the sun one time for each year while the children sing a special song. A nice addition to this celebration is to include a photographic "time line" of your child's life, for example one or two photos for each year of your child's life to share with his/her classmates and teachers.

### **BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS**

Children's feelings are very easily hurt if they see a child being given an invitation and they do not receive one. Please be very discrete if you are not inviting all the children in the class. Invitations can be placed in individual mail slots outside each classroom. Please do not ask the teachers to distribute the invitations for you.

### **CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS**

Children learn about a number of different cultural celebrations throughout the school year. On occasion, parents are invited into the classroom to share their celebration with the children.

Note: For Halloween, we ask that the children not come to school dressed in costumes. The fantasy associated with Halloween is not appropriate for children of this age. Many of the young children find it extremely disconcerting to see their classmates dressed in costumes, and often become uncomfortable and confused. We celebrate this event by encouraging children to come dressed in orange and black. The school will provide the snack as always as we strive to be an allergy and nutrition aware school. Candy is not permitted in school.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

---

Trips are planned to enhance the children's learning experience. Parents are encouraged to participate in school trips. All children partake in trips to various locations outside of the school. Trip fees are paid in advance when necessary.

## **EMERGENCY PLAN PROCEDURES**

---

### **EARTHQUAKES**

Should an earthquake occur while your child is at school, he or she will be looked after by staff members until such time as you, or a person designated by you, are able to come to the school.

**Please do not telephone the school.** Phone lines must be kept open for official use and emergency calls only. We have water, food, first aid kits, flashlights, radio and other equipment on location.

Each child will have a Comfort Kit organized by their parent. These kits will be kept along with our earthquake supplies. Having a small familiar toy and a snack will help your child cope more easily.

According to the North Shore Branch of the Provincial Emergency Program, a reception centre would not become effective until approximately 72 hours after the earthquake. It is therefore important that we remain at our school location with our equipment and supplies. We would go to a designated reception centre on the instruction of the Emergency Services. If this were to occur, we would leave instructions as to where we were.

### **FIRE**

In the event of fire, children will always exit the building using the safest exit route and gather in the parking area. Please note the exits on the individual classroom exit plan.

Earthquake and fire drills are practiced once a month.

## **DONATIONS AND FUNDRAISING**

---

Gatehouse Montessori School operates financially on tuition fees, fundraising and donations, as well as support from the BC government. The school is a registered charity/non-profit society and has a federal tax number enabling individuals to make donations to the school and receive a receipt for income tax purposes.

We have an annual fundraising event. There are a number of ways to participate. Specific information is sent out prior to the event.

Often, parents wish to donate something to the school in honour of their child's birthday. You may wish to donate a book, which will then become part of our library collection. From time to time we need new materials for the classrooms or a teacher may know of a specific item that the class needs. In this case you may want to give a monetary donation to cover or help towards the cost of an item for the school. As we are a non-profit, charitable organization, a tax receipt will be issued for monetary donations over \$20.

We would like to acknowledge the financial support of the BC Government who provides funding to our school under these programs:

- The BC Ministry of Education, Independent Schools
- The BC Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services: Child Care Operating Funding Program
- BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch: Direct Access Program Grant
- BC Family Services Society

## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

---

Confidentiality at Gatehouse refers to all verbal and written information about potential, enrolling and former:

- Children and families
- Employees
- It also refers to information related to 'in camera' board discussions and decisions.

All staff and board members will be expected to fulfill their obligation to respect protection of privacy. Each individual will ensure that no private or personal information is revealed that may cause another individual harm.

This excludes the responsibility that service providers and others have as outlined in legislation and/or when information is subpoenaed by court.

### **CUSTODY AND CONTROL OF RECORDS**

Custody and control of the children's records will belong solely to Gatehouse Montessori School Society unless contractual arrangements and/or legislation alter this policy.

### **CLIENT INFORMATION**

The principle of 'need to know' will guide all service providers and board members in judging who will have access to information about children and their families and how much information about a child and/or their family will be shared.

No information will be released about a child and the enrolling parent/guardian without first receiving written permission of the enrolling parent/guardian. This excludes the responsibility service providers have as outlined in legislation (e.g., duty to report need for protection) as well as access to information that is subpoenaed by the court.

### **STORAGE OF CLIENT INFORMATION**

All written information that is confidential will be properly kept in files and stored in the locked filing cabinet in the school office. Access to these files will be restricted only to those 'who need to know' such information.