Great River
MONTESSORI

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FAMILY HANDBOOK

"Montessori is an education for independence, preparing not just for school, but for life."

-Dr. Maria Montessori

Great River Montessori Family Handbook

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Purpose of Handbook

At Great River Montessori, we prioritize the health and safety of every child. Our learning environments are maintained with child-safe cleaning products and are regularly assessed to ensure safety and cleanliness.

Staff are trained and certified in First Aid, CPR/AED, Abusive Head Trauma Prevention, SIDS Prevention, and Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention. GRM is a registered private school with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and follows all applicable safety guidelines.

This handbook outlines our philosophy, policies, and procedures, including those related to enrollment, curriculum, health and safety, child guidance, and emergency planning. We encourage families to review it carefully and refer to it as needed. A digital copy is available at www.greatrivermontessori.com, and printed copies are available upon request.

While this handbook is a helpful resource, we value ongoing communication and invite you to reach out to the Administrative Team or teaching staff with any questions. We look forward to working together to support your child's learning and well-being.

Notice

The policies in this handbook are to be considered as guidelines. Policies and rules, as explained in this handbook, may be changed from time to time as business, governing agency regulation, legislation, and economic conditions dictate. The Administrative Team and/or the Board of Directors, at their option, may change, suspend, or discontinue any part of the policies at any time without prior notice. If and when updates are required, you will be notified of any changes. No one other than the Administration or Board of Directors of GRM may alter or modify any of the policies in this handbook.

Should any provision in this handbook be found unenforceable and invalid, such finding does not invalidate the entire handbook, but only the subject provision.

About Us

Contact Information

Center Name	Great River Montessori Inc.
Address	315 Ryan St. Holmen, WI 54636
Phone Number	(608) 615-1800
Website	greatrivermontessori.com
Email Addresses	admin@greatrivermontessori.com
Additional Information	Front Office: Ext. 101 Infant: Colby Lawrynk (Ms. Colby) Ext. 120 Toddler: Abigail Von Arx (Ms. Abby) Ext. 121 Children's House 3K: Ava Bladl (Ms. Ava) Ext. 122 Children's House 4K: Alexa Quam (Ms. Q) Ext. 124 Children's House K, E1/E2, & Homeschool Co-Op: Samantha Jenson (Ms. Sam) Ext. 123

History

Great River Montessori Inc. (GRM) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, private, non-denominational school that was originally established in 2019. Initially located in Onalaska, WI., the facility was specifically chosen to serve the children and families of the surrounding communities. The original building was designed as a one-classroom space to enroll students from three-year-old preschool through sixth grade. It featured an outdoor environment for play and nature exploration, and was surrounded by natural beauty, including nearby bike trails, a wildlife refuge, Lake Onalaska, the Mississippi River, and prairie landscapes.

In response to growing demand and the need for more space, GRM has since relocated to a new facility in Holmen, WI. This move was driven by our commitment to better serve our community by expanding our capacity to accommodate a long and growing waitlist. The new location provides additional classrooms and introduces programs for infants and toddlers, allowing us to offer care and education to a broader range of students. This growth reflects our dedication to meeting the needs of local families while maintaining our focus on fostering a nurturing and enriching environment for all our students.

GRM was founded by Samantha Jenson and Alexa Quam based on the Montessori Education Method. It was developed with the intent to provide a high quality education alternative to the community's youth and provide them with an authentic Montessori education.

Mission

Great River Montessori is a growing partnership between children, school, community, and nature. GRM embraces the Montessori principles, developing the child's full potential and a life-long love of learning.

Core Values

Great River Montessori:

- Provides a high quality and authentic Montessori education for all students, guided by the Montessori philosophy, curriculum, and materials.
- Maintains a carefully prepared learning environment indoors and outdoors of the facility that is safe, promotes problem solving and independence, and is filled with nature and beauty.
- Creates a school culture that embraces diversity, promotes peace, acceptance, and development of the "whole child".
- Attracts and retains exceptional, Montessori-trained, passionate teachers who believe in a child-centered education approach and in easing the transition between home and school.

Montessori Philosophy and Methods

Great River Montessori is an authentic Montessori school providing high-quality education and care for infants through 6th grade. This unique methodology of teaching, developed by Maria Montessori, focuses specifically on the development of the whole child and on each child's unique range of abilities, celebrating each child's individuality. The school provides an atmosphere where students learn through the following:

- Engaging hands-on Montessori materials
- The children's own intrinsic motivation to learn
- A diverse and appealing environment
- The connection of nature to learning

The goal of this intentionally prepared environment is to create a space where children are free to explore the world around them and to grow a lifelong love for learning.

At Great River Montessori, our goal is to provide a child-centered environment where all children, parents and families feel welcomed and valued. Children participate in a program of educationally challenging activities and supportive personal interactions planned to foster their social, physical, emotional and intellectual development.

Montessori Materials and Curriculum

The Montessori curriculum is child-centered and based on scientific observations of the child. The curriculum is personalized and follows each child's development as it unfolds. Classroom materials are specifically designed and crafted out of real, natural material. They are not toys, and each one has a specific purpose. These materials lead to self-directed activity, incorporate the children's interests, and involve the children's senses, which intrigues them and motivates them to engage, play and learn. The materials and lessons in each curriculum area move from the most concrete and hands-on to the more abstract, following the typical pattern of children's neurological development.

The curriculum areas in the classroom are interconnected and specifically ordered to promote success and purposeful learning. These curricular elements include practical life, sensorial, math, language, history, science, and geography. Art, music, and physical activity are also incorporated into the environment. These materials and curricula promote movement, problem solving, social interactions, and peace education. Children move through these curriculum areas at their own pace, under the guidance of the teacher. GRM builds from the Montessori philosophy and curriculum to make mindfulness and connections to nature a particular focus of specific lessons and experiences.

Classroom and Environment

GRM offers five multi-age Montessori classrooms: Infant, Toddler 1, 3K, Children's House 4K and Kindergarten, Elementary 1 & Elementary 2. The Infant classroom provides a nurturing, secure environment where caregivers respond attentively to each child's needs, supporting developmental milestones like rolling, crawling, and early communication. The Toddler and 3K classrooms foster independence and confidence, with a focus on practical life skills, language development, and social interaction.

The Children's House classroom includes four-year-old preschoolers and kindergarteners, while the Elementary 1&2 classroom serves first - sixth graders. Multi-age classrooms afford students many benefits. Children in multi-age groupings form strong relationships with their peers and teachers, learn from one another, and are motivated to try new lessons they see older students completing. Older students, in turn, develop patience, compassion, and leadership skills as they guide and support younger peers.

All classrooms are thoughtfully prepared environments filled with beauty, natural light, and real, purposeful materials that are developmentally and size-appropriate. Each space reflects a connection to nature and celebrates diversity, incorporating the cultures, families, and identities of the students. The classroom culture promotes peace, respect, and responsibility while fostering connections to the local community and the surrounding natural environment. The carefully designed spaces inspire curiosity, independence, and a lifelong love of learning, meeting the developmental needs of each child at every stage.

Individualized Education

A child's lifelong love for learning begins in the Montessori environment. The child receives freedom to explore, to follow their intrinsic motivation, and to benefit from an individualized educational experience.

GRM utilizes Montessori child-centered pedagogy that follows the development of each child. We provide students with lessons in small groups or individually. Lessons are chosen based on the specific skills each student is working on, not by age or grade.

The schedule each day includes an uninterrupted work period. During this period, students explore the works, or materials, that are interesting to them, socialize with others, move freely, and solve problems. These experiences help students learn to self-regulate and be independent while the teacher observes. Teachers also guide students through works and lessons that build the skills necessary to act freely and gracefully.

Academic Standards in a Montessori Setting

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) define baseline expectations for each grade level in English Language Arts and Mathematics, for publicly-funded schools.

While the Montessori approach to education varies greatly from a traditional educational approach, Montessori education is time-tested and research-based and meets or exceeds these baseline minimum standards. The Montessori curriculum takes the child beyond basic academic skills, and helps develop skills that not only help them master the Common Core State Standards, but also prepare them to apply what they have learned in new and creative ways inside and outside of the classroom.

Montessori education and materials provide students with a deep understanding of concepts, as well as deep motivation to continue learning independently, to problem solve, and to work collaboratively. By using the scope and sequence of the Montessori curriculum, observing and assessing progress often, and respecting the child, Montessori students not only meet but often exceed the CCSS.

In her book, *Montessori: The Science behind the Genius*, Dr. Angeline Stoll Lillard states, “No other single educational curriculum comes close to the Montessori curriculum in terms of its levels of depth, breadth, and interrelationship across time and topic.”

Learning Outcomes at GRM

Based on observation, interaction with students, and the Montessori work being completed, GRM assesses each child’s development and the pace at which they are reaching developmentally appropriate learning outcomes. These learning outcomes will be determined by the child’s own development, state standards, and observation. Learning outcomes and mastered works will be available for families to view via a Montessori communications website that is private, secure, and carefully monitored by staff members. Each student has a unique profile on this site, through which observation notes, presentations, and other learning artifacts can be accessed by approved individuals.

Enrollment & Withdrawal

Admission and Enrollment

Great River Montessori (GRM) welcomes applications based on the following criteria:

- Age and developmental readiness
- Previous school records (if applicable)
- Program availability and classroom balance
- The child’s individual needs and ability to thrive in the Montessori environment

- Family commitment to GRM's philosophy, policies, and procedures

Priority for Enrollment

1. Children of GRM staff
2. Returning students and their siblings
3. New applicants from the community, as space allows

Age Requirements & Transition Criteria

- Infants: 6 weeks – 1 year old
- Toddlers: 1 year – 2.5 years old
- 3K Children's House: 2.5 – 4 years old and fully potty trained
- 4K Children's House: 4 years old by September 1
- Kindergarten: 5 years old by September 1
- 1st Grade: 6 years old by September 1 and successful completion of a 5-year-old kindergarten program
- Grades 2 and above: Placement typically based on successful completion of the prior grade
- Montessori experience is encouraged, but not required, for Elementary admission

Transitions between classrooms are determined by age, readiness, and classroom availability. Parents will be notified and involved in transition planning.

Application Process

- Applications are submitted through TUIO, GRM's online enrollment and tuition platform.
- All school-aged students must submit a new application each year.
- Infant and toddler families must apply for review and acceptance into their desired program.
- Once accepted, a $100 enrollment fee per child is required. This fee is non-refundable and secures the child's space, confirming the family's commitment to GRM's policies and tuition obligations.
- Additional forms may be required prior to the first day of school. Families are responsible for keeping contact, medical, and family information current.

Waitlist

- If a program is full, families may join the waitlist.
- Children not yet old enough to attend may also be placed on the waitlist once recommended for a program.

- Waitlist placement does not guarantee enrollment. When a spot becomes available, families will be contacted and must confirm acceptance by completing enrollment forms and paying the enrollment fee within 48 hours.

Program Changes

- Families may request program or tuition plan changes through administration.
- Changes are not guaranteed and, if approved, will take effect at the beginning of the next month.

Withdrawal

Before the Start of the School Year

- Families remain financially responsible for September tuition if unenrollment occurs before the school year begins.
- A written withdrawal notice is required.

During the School Year

- A 30-day written notice of unenrollment is required.
- Families will be charged tuition for the 30 days following notification, regardless of attendance.
- Enrollment and tuition fees are non-refundable.
- Mid-year withdrawal may impact eligibility for re-enrollment in future years.

School-Initiated Withdrawal

GRM reserves the right to request withdrawal if:

- Enrollment forms are incomplete
- Tuition agreements or payment obligations are not met
- A child's needs cannot be adequately supported within the program
- Behavior endangers the safety or well-being of others
- Families repeatedly disregard school policies or respectful communication standards

In such cases, administration will meet with families to explore alternatives or referrals.

Financial Responsibility

By enrolling at GRM, families agree to full financial responsibility for tuition, fees, pledges, and charges for their child(ren). GRM reserves the right to:

- Apply late fees for delinquent accounts
- Withhold report cards, transcripts, or records until balances are paid
- Suspend attendance or deny re-enrollment for unpaid balances
- Pursue legal action in cases of severe delinquency

Tuition & Family Commitments

Tuition Overview

Tuition at Great River Montessori (GRM) includes licensing-required fees, a portion of school operational expenses, and staff salaries. Tuition is charged on a fixed monthly basis for each child's regular schedule.

- No Adjustments: Tuition is not reduced for school closings, scheduled breaks, sick days, vacation, or other absences.
- Additional Fees: A few times per year, a field trip or related transportation may require an additional fee. Participation is optional; however, alternative care will not be available on-site.
- Additional Care: Extended or extra hours outside a student's regular schedule will be billed separately.

Billing Cycles

Families select a tuition billing option at the time of enrollment:

- Infants & Toddlers:
    - Monthly billing cycle (tuition is due on the first business day of each month).
    - Monthly amounts are calculated on a 52-week cycle.
- 4K & Older:
    - Nine-month billing cycle (tuition due on the first business day of each month, September–May), or
    - One installment (full tuition paid in advance by September 1).

All payments must be made electronically through TUIO.

Sibling Discounts

- First child: no discount
- Second child: 10% off annual tuition
- Third child: 20% off annual tuition

- Fourth child: 30% off annual tuition

No tuition refunds are offered for absences. Families are obligated to pay the full annual tuition and applicable fees regardless of payment plan selection.

Delinquent Accounts

Tuition is due on the first business day of the month. A five-day grace period is provided. After this period:

- The account will be considered delinquent, and the student may not attend until tuition is current.
- A $35 late fee will be applied.
- A $5 daily fee will accrue for each day past due beyond the grace period.

If full payment cannot be made, a payment plan must be arranged within 30 days. Payment plans will not exceed 60 days and must be approved by both parties.

If no contact or plan is established within 30 days of delinquency, the account will be referred to Small Claims Court and services with GRM will be terminated.

Family Service Hours

As a nonprofit school, GRM depends on the partnership of families to maintain a high-quality educational environment while keeping tuition increases to a minimum. Tuition alone does not cover all expenses.

Families are expected to contribute volunteer time and talents to support the school community. Tasks vary depending on school needs and individual skills. Opportunities will be communicated throughout the year.

Fundraising

Fundraising is an essential part of GRM's financial health. Families are expected to participate in school-wide fundraising efforts, which help reduce tuition increases and support annual budgetary goals.

GRM makes every effort to keep fundraising limited by selecting only the most impactful and successful events. As a private nonprofit institution, tuition and fundraising are the two primary funding sources that sustain our programs and operations.

Registration & Student Records

Registration Forms

Once accepted, all students must complete the mandatory Enrollment Form via TUIO by the specified deadline (unless otherwise communicated). Families will receive an email link to complete forms online.

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying GRM of any changes to their child's information.

Required Forms

- Child Health Report – Child Care Centers (DCF-F-CFS60):
    - Completed by a licensed physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice nurse prescriber.
    - Must be on file within 90 days of a child's first day of attendance.
    - For children under 2: Initial exam within 6 months before or 3 months after admission, with follow-ups every 6 months.
    - For children ages 2–5: Initial exam within 1 year before or 3 months after admission, with follow-ups every 2 years.
- Immunization Record:
    - Parents must provide a record of immunizations or a signed waiver for medical, religious, or personal exemption.
    - Wisconsin law requires immunization records to be updated and submitted within 30 days of enrollment.

Infant/Toddler Care Plans

Prior to starting in the infant or toddler classroom, families must provide information to individualize care. This includes:

1. Schedule of meals and feeding
2. Types and timing of food introduction
3. Toileting and diapering procedures
4. Sleep and nap schedule
5. Child's communication and comfort needs
6. Developmental and health history

Teachers will review and document changes in care routines every 3 months in consultation with parents.

Student Files

Each student's file may include:

- Basic identifying information
- Academic transcript and test scores (if applicable)
- Attendance records
- Health records
- Developmental updates and anecdotal notes
- Staff and parent/guardian communications
- Family background information (if relevant to care/education)
- Psychological or special education evaluations (if applicable)
- Disciplinary information
- Correspondence between GRM and parents

Files are confidential and may be reviewed only by parents/guardians, certified teachers, and administration. Parents may request an appointment to review their child's records by contacting the office.

Privacy & Confidentiality

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Medical history and conditions
- Family status and financial information
- Personal family matters or behaviors

Access is limited to GRM staff, state monitors, and teachers directly responsible for the child. Written parent permission is required to release records to outside agencies or schools, except where otherwise required by law.

Sensitive issues (behavior, special needs, etc.) are always discussed privately and respectfully with families.

FERPA Rights

In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), parents/guardians and eligible students (age 18+) have the right to:

- Inspect and review the student's educational records.
- Request amendments to records believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of rights.

- Be notified annually of these rights and GRM's directory information policy.

Limitations include:

- Families may only review information related to their own child.
- Parents' financial records are not accessible to students.
- Letters of recommendation prior to 1/1/95 are excluded; after 1/1/95, access depends on waivers signed.

Exceptions to Nondisclosure:

Where records may be shared without parent consent.

GRM officials or teachers with legitimate educational interest.

- Another school district in which the child enrolls (parents will be provided copies of forwarded records).
- Financial aid considerations.
- Court orders or subpoenas.
- Healthcare providers or emergency personnel if necessary for health and safety.
- Directory information, provided GRM has followed FERPA notice procedures.

Transfer of Records

In accordance with Wisconsin Statute 11.8.125(4), GRM will transfer pupil records within 5 working days when receiving written notice of a student's enrollment in another school or agency, or when directed by a court.

Records forwarded will be appropriately redacted to protect the privacy of other children.

School Hours, Daily Routine, and Programs

Great River Montessori offers programs in the Infant, Toddler, 3k Children's House, 4k Children's House, Elementary One and Two classrooms, and Homeschool Co-Op. All programs follow the Montessori philosophy, scope and sequence, and curriculum.

Students in GRM programs are growing their love for learning and their respect for others and the environment. They become critical thinkers and problem solvers, and strive to further their own knowledge and independence. They are learning about and becoming part of the natural world, building a relationship with all living things, developing social and emotional skills, learning the virtues of character, grace and courtesy, and becoming more mindful of the world around them, their peers, and their own thoughts and feelings.

Infant, Toddler, and 3k Children's House Programs

The Infant, Toddler, and 3k Children's House Montessori classrooms are thoughtfully designed environments that nurture the youngest learners during their most formative years. These spaces are calm, safe, and prepared with developmentally appropriate materials that encourage exploration, independence, and sensory engagement. For infants, the focus is on creating a secure and nurturing atmosphere where caregivers respond attentively to each child's needs, supporting milestones like rolling, crawling, and early communication. The toddler and 3k Children's House classrooms emphasize practical life skills, fostering autonomy through activities like pouring, cleaning, and self-care, while also offering rich opportunities for social development and language acquisition. All three classrooms provide a prepared environment that inspires curiosity, joy, and confidence, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning.

Program Options

Full Time: 5 days a week 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Daily Schedule: Infants, Toddlers, and 3k Children's House

7:00 - 9:00 AM: Arrival and Settling In

- Infants: Arrival routines with caregiver support (diaper changes, feeding if needed, soothing activities). Free exploration of age-appropriate sensory toys or tummy time for non-mobile infants.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Arrival routines with independence encouraged (putting belongings away, washing hands). Free play with Montessori-inspired materials (blocks, puzzles, stacking toys).

8:00 - 10:15 AM: Montessori Work Period

- Infants: Individual exploration of sensory and gross motor materials, supported tummy time, and simple object permanence or cause-and-effect toys. Naps as needed.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Montessori work period with focus on sensorial and practical life activities (pouring, scooping, transferring objects, early sorting tasks). Independent snack available.

10:15-10:30 AM: Group Time

- Infants: Gentle interactions with caregivers, songs, fingerplays, and sensory activities like exploring soft textures or rattles.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Short group activity including songs, movement, and a story to begin the day.

10:30-11:30AM: Outdoor Exploration and Lunch

- Infants: Stroller walk, outdoor tummy time, or time on a blanket exploring natural materials (leaves, grass, pinecones) with caregiver interaction.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Gross motor play, climbing, running, or exploring a nature area. Activities like gardening or water play can also be introduced.
- Infants: Bottle feeding or caregiver-supported solid feeding (as appropriate for age). Gentle interaction and soothing during feeding.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Help with setting tables and washing hands, then lunch. Focus on fostering independence (self-feeding, pouring water, cleaning up spills).

11:30 AM - 2:00 PM: Rest/Quiet Time

- Infants: Naps following individual schedules. Quiet, calm environment maintained with dim lighting and soft music.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Scheduled nap or rest period with quiet options (books, puzzles) for those who wake early or do not nap.

2:00 - 2:30 PM: Snack and Quiet Activities

- Infants: Bottle feeding or solid feeding as needed, followed by quiet activities like cuddling, tummy time, or soothing music.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Independent snack time followed by calm activities like reading, drawing, or exploring simple Montessori materials.

2:30-3:30PM: Afternoon Work Period and/or Group Enrichment Activities

- Infants: Individual sensory exploration, exploring textures, listening to different sounds, object tracking games, or one-on-one interactions with caregivers (reading, simple stacking). Naps as needed.
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Montessori work period with new materials (e.g., puzzles, sorting, early art activities). Focus on sensory and practical life skills. Creative enrichment like art (finger painting, sponge stamping), music , or mindfulness exercises (breathing games, gentle yoga)

3:30-4:30PM: Outdoor Play or Nature Exploration

- Infants: Stroller walk or floor exploration in the shade (safe outdoor objects to reach and grasp).
- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Nature-based activities like collecting leaves, watering plants, or free outdoor play with gross motor challenges.

4:30 - 5:00 PM: Transition to Dismissal

- Infants: One-on-one interactions with caregivers while preparing for parent pick-up. Soothing activities like rocking or soft music.

- Toddler and 3k Children's House: Assist with clean-up jobs, washing hands, and preparing to leave. Quiet activities like books or puzzles until parents arrive.

Children's House 4K Preschool Program

4k Children's House is a multi-age group of four-year-old preschoolers and five-year-olds. The environment is designed to bridge the gap between school and home. It is filled with beautiful, purposeful Montessori materials that start with the most hands-on and concrete and move on to the more abstract. These carefully designed materials and associated activities promote independence through social interactions with others. The 4k Children's House classroom includes child-sized furniture and fixtures that also serve a purpose and intentionally build students' confidence and independence. The classroom design reflects beauty, nature, and respect for each individual. The teacher serves as a guide and presents lessons to the students individually or in small groups. Lessons are initially presented by the teacher; then the students may choose to engage with whatever most interests them during the three-hour work period.

Program Options

Full Time: 5 days a week, 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

After and Before School Care available at an additional cost, starting at 7:00 AM and ending at 5:00 PM.

Kindergarten, Elementary 1 & 2 (Grades K-6), & Homeschool Co-Op

This classroom includes kindergarten students, E1 which is a multi-age group of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders, E2 which is a multi-age group of 4th, 5th, and 6th graders, and homeschool co-op students, elementary aged. You will find students working as a community exploring all that life entails. The materials for these students are beautifully designed pieces that attract the children's eyes and intrigue them to take off the shelf and manipulate. The Montessori curriculum spirals, pulling from prior learning and adding new experiences that build up to future lessons.

Program Options

Full Time: Kindergarten, E1, & E2: 5 Days a Week, 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Students must be in attendance by 8:10 AM, unless notifying school, or will be marked tardy. If the number of unexcused absences or tardies begins to affect the students uninterrupted work period or academic success, a meeting with administration and parents will be required.

Full Time: Homeschool Co-Op, Three or Two Days, 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Part Time: Homeschool Co-Op, Three or Two Days, 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Daily Schedule: Children's House 4K, K, E1, E2, & Homeschool Co-Op

7:00 - 7:50 AM: Before School Care (additional cost)

- School opens with supervised free play in a calm, welcoming environment.

7:50 - 8:00 AM: Arrival and Morning Routine

- All students arrive, put belongings away, and prepare for the day.

8:00 - 10:30 AM: Morning Work Period

- Individualized or small group lessons.
- Work with Montessori materials, emphasizing independence and concentration.
- Independent snack is available during this time.

10:30 - 10:45 AM: Morning Line/Group Meeting

- A short gathering for songs, sharing, or discussing the day's activities.

11:00 - 11:30 AM: Recess

- Outdoor play or gross motor activities to refresh and energize.

11:30 - 12:00 PM: Lunch

- Lunch is served, focusing on self-care skills like eating independently and cleaning up afterward.

12:00 PM: Part-Time Dismissal (4K and Homeschool Students)

12:15 - 1:30 PM: Quiet/Rest Period

- Quiet activities such as independent reading, buddy reading, or rest.
- Afternoon lessons or individualized support for students who do not nap.

1:30 - 2:45 PM: Extension and Enrichment Activities

- Creative enrichment activities such as mindfulness lessons, nature exploration, and art.

2:45 - 3:00 PM: Clean-Up and Dismissal Preparation

- End-of-day jobs and preparing for full-day dismissal.

3:00 PM: Full-Day Dismissal

3:10 - 5:00 PM: After School Care (additional cost)

- Structured free play, crafts, or outdoor activities in a relaxed environment.

Homeschool Family Co-Op Agreement

This agreement is made between Great River Montessori (GRM) and the undersigned homeschool family to outline the terms and conditions for participation in the GRM Homeschool Co-Op Program for students in Kindergarten – 6th grade.

Program Overview

GRM offers a Montessori-based co-op program where homeschooled students may attend part-time (half-day) or full-time (full-day), two or three days per week for structured learning experiences, social interaction, and access to Montessori materials. This program is designed to supplement home education and does not fulfill state-mandated academic requirements.

Enrollment Options & Monthly Tuition

Families may choose between part-time (half-day) or full-time (full-day) participation:

Program	2 Days/Week	3 Days/Week
Part-Time (8:00 AM – 12:00 PM)	$195/month	$280/month
Full-Time (8:00 AM – 3:00 PM)	$325/month	$475/month

- Tuition is billed monthly and is due on the first of each month.
- Families must commit to a consistent schedule. Changes require advance notice and approval.

Parent & School Responsibilities

Great River Montessori Will Provide:

- A Montessori learning environment tailored to elementary-aged students.
- Structured lessons, guided activities, and independent work time using Montessori materials.
- Participation in snack, lunch, and recess for both part-time and full-time students.
- Access to Montessori Compass, allowing parents to track lessons their child receives.

Parents Agree To:

- Maintain their child's official homeschool status through the state. GRM is not responsible for fulfilling state-mandated academic hours.
- Provide lunch and snacks each day their child attends.
- Ensure timely drop-off (8:00 AM) and pick-up (12:00 PM for part-time, 3:00 PM for full-time).
- Follow all policies and procedures outlined in the GRM School Handbook, including the payment and withdrawal policies. Parents will be required to review and sign the handbook agreement upon enrollment.
- Communicate schedule changes or absences in advance.

Policies & Expectations

- Behavior & Participation: Students are expected to follow GRM's behavioral guidelines and participate respectfully in Montessori activities.
- Sick Policy: If a student is ill, parents must keep them home and notify GRM as soon as possible.
- Payments & Withdrawals:
    - Tuition is billed monthly and due on the first of each month.
    - Families must adhere to GRM's payment policy and withdrawal policy as stated in the school handbook.
    - Failure to comply with payment deadlines may result in suspension from the program.

Additional Care (Applies to Four-Year-Old Preschool and older)

Before School Care

This program provides care from 7:00-7:50 AM for families that need childcare before school begins. Any child arriving prior to 7:50 AM must enroll in this program. Families may sign up for this program at an additional rate.

After School Care

This program is for families that need childcare beyond 3:10 PM. After school care is from 3:10 PM to 5:00 PM. Families may sign up for this program at an additional rate.

Rest & Nap Time

At Great River Montessori, we follow all Wisconsin DCF regulations for rest and nap times. We believe rest is an important part of the child's day, supporting both their physical health and emotional well-being.

General Guidelines

- Children under five years of age will be provided with a minimum of 30 minutes of rest time each afternoon.
- Once a child turns five, nap time is no longer required; however, parents who wish for their child to continue resting may communicate this request directly to the classroom teacher.
- During rest time, soft music may be played, and a staff member will remain present in the room at all times.
- If a child falls asleep, we respect their body's need for rest and will allow them to sleep.
    - Our goal is for each child's waking experience to be gentle and natural.
- Children who do not fall asleep within 30 minutes will be offered quiet, age-appropriate activities.
- Parents are encouraged to discuss any specific nap-related requests or concerns with their child's teacher.

Infants (6 weeks–12 months)

- Each infant will follow their natural sleep/wake routine as communicated by parents.
- All rest times will be logged and communicated through the family app.
- Infants will each have their own child-safe crib with four secured sides.
- Each crib includes a tight-fitting mattress and crib sheet provided by GRM. Sheets are not shared, will be washed weekly by GRM, and immediately if soiled.
- For safety, infants under one year of age may not have soft or loose materials in the crib. This includes pillows, blankets, flat sheets, bumper pads, bibs, pacifiers with attached objects, or stuffed animals. Nothing may be hung on crib sides.
- If a child falls asleep in a swing, car seat, or other equipment, they will be immediately moved to a crib and placed on their back.
- If a child arrives asleep, they will be gently woken before the parent leaves.
- Only a physician may authorize an alternate sleep position for infants under one year of age.
- DCF does not recommend swaddling. Swaddling is permitted only with written parent authorization, must use a sleep sack or blanket sleeper (not a blanket), and is not recommended beyond one month of age.
    - If a family chooses their child to be swaddled, swaddles will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed.

Toddlers, 3K, and 4K

Families must provide:

- A 2-inch thick nap mat
- A small pillow
- Either a small sheet and blanket or a sleeping bag

All items must be labeled with the child's name and stored in the child's cubby. Bedding will be sent home each Friday (or the last school day of the week) for cleaning and must be returned at the start of the following week.

Safe Sleep Practices

- All infants under 1 year of age will always be placed on their backs in a crib for sleep, unless they can independently roll over. Once an infant can roll independently, they may assume their own preferred sleep position.
- For all children, safe, sanitary, and age-appropriate sleep materials are required and maintained.

Staff Training

All staff who work with children will receive education on safe sleep practices. Staff are trained to implement DCF regulations, monitor children during rest time, and ensure a calm, safe, and respectful environment.

Diapering and Bathroom

At Great River Montessori (GRM), we prioritize each child's developmental needs while fostering independence and self-care skills. This policy outlines our approach to diapering, toilet training, and bathroom procedures for children from infancy through 6th grade.

Bathroom Assistance

To ensure safety, supervision, and transparency, staff follow an open-door or visibility policy when assisting children in the bathroom. Doors may remain partially open, and bathrooms are designed to allow supervision while respecting each child's dignity and privacy. Staff offer support only as needed and are trained to provide assistance in a respectful, age-appropriate manner. When able, staff will also inform another staff member they will be assisting in the bathroom as to maintain appropriate supervision of the other students and to help ensure privacy while the door is partially open.

Infant and Toddler Diapering

- Before a child enters the infant classroom, parents will provide written information about their child's toileting routine and needs to help staff individualize care.

- GRM staff will promptly change wet and soiled diapers on a clean, disinfected surface designed for safety and supervision. Hands will be washed thoroughly by both the child and caregiver after each diaper change.
- Diapering supplies, including diapers and wipes, must be provided by families and stored in a designated space. Families should also provide an adequate supply of diapers, wipes, and extra clothing appropriate for their child's current stage.
- Parents may choose to use cloth diapers. Soiled cloth diapers will be placed in a sealed, labeled bag and sent home daily.
- Any lotions, powders, or salves must be in their original packaging, accompanied by written parental or physician instructions, and applied accordingly.
- Children may continue wearing diapers or pull-ups while developing toileting skills. The transition to underwear will be based on the child's developmental readiness and determined in coordination with the family.
- Diaper changes and relevant toileting information will be communicated to families daily through GRM's communication app.

<u>Infant and Toddler Toilet Training & Transition to Independence</u>

GRM works closely with families to support a smooth and consistent toilet training process. Toileting is viewed as an important Practical Life skill and an opportunity for children to develop independence, confidence, body awareness, and self-care skills.

Toileting is a developmental process that involves many individual skills. Children develop these skills at different rates, and our approach is based on the individual child's readiness, comfort, and abilities.

Toilet Training & Readiness

GRM will make no routine attempts to toilet train children under 18 months of age.

Beginning around 18 months, teachers may observe for signs that a child is becoming ready to develop toileting skills. Toilet training will begin when the child demonstrates readiness and in coordination with the child's family.

Readiness involves more than age. A child may begin showing readiness when they demonstrate these beginning signs.

Signs of readiness may include:

- Showing interest in the bathroom or toilet.
- Observing the process surrounding bathroom use.
- Wanting to sit on a potty or toilet.
- Recognizing when a diaper or underwear is wet or soiled.
- Remaining dry for longer periods of time.

- Showing awareness of the physical signals associated with needing to use the bathroom.
- Wanting to participate in dressing and undressing.
- Showing interest in becoming more independent with self-care.

Toileting is a Process

Learning to use the toilet independently involves many separate skills. Children will have opportunities to develop and practice these skills gradually.

These skills include:

1. Recognizing when a diaper or underwear is wet or soiled
2. Developing an awareness of wanting to remain dry and clean and/or staying dry for approximately two hours
3. Recognizing physical signals that the bladder or bowels need to be emptied.
4. Moving to the bathroom
5. Pulling pants and underwear up and down
6. Sitting on the toilet and/or sitting long enough to empty the bladder or bowels, generally 2–5 minutes
7. Wiping with appropriate guidance and assistance
8. Getting down from the toilet safely
9. Flushing
10. Washing and drying hands

A child may be independent with some steps while still needing assistance with others. This is a normal part of the learning process.

Montessori and Independence

- Montessori education encourages children to become increasingly independent in caring for themselves.
- Teachers prepare the environment, demonstrate the appropriate steps, and provide opportunities for children to practice.
- Children are encouraged to complete as much of the toileting routine independently as their abilities allow.
- Teachers will remain nearby to provide appropriate supervision and assistance. Assistance will be provided when a child needs help or requests help.

Family Partnership & Consistency Between Home and School

Parents and caregivers play an important role in a child's toileting development. Consistency between home and school helps children build confidence and develop toileting skills at their own pace.

Teachers and families are encouraged to communicate regularly about:

- Signs of readiness, progress, or concerns.
- The child's current toileting skills and routines.
- Words and language used when discussing toileting and body functions.
- Successful strategies and bathroom routines.
- Diapers, pull-ups, underwear, and clothing needs.
- Changes at home that may affect the child's toileting development.

Significant changes may include:

- Moving.
- A new sibling.
- Travel.
- Changes in routine.
- Starting or changing childcare arrangements.
- Illness.
- Other significant family changes.

Teachers use simple, accurate, and age-appropriate language when discussing toileting and body functions. In the toddler classroom, teachers commonly use the terms bathroom, potty, pee, poop, wet, and dry. Families are encouraged to use similar language at home whenever possible to help provide consistency for the child.

Teachers are available as a resource and will work in partnership with families to support each child's development and maintain consistent routines and strategies between home and school.

Clothing

Appropriate clothing can make a significant difference in a child's ability to practice toileting independently.

Families are encouraged to provide:

- Pants with elastic waistbands.
- Shorts with elastic waistbands.

- Loose-fitting clothing.
- Skirts that can easily be pulled up and down.

The following may interfere with a child's developing independence:

- Buttons, buckles, zippers, and straps.
- Tight clothing, tights, onesies, overalls, and jumpsuits.
- Dresses that are difficult to manage or skirts that cannot easily be pulled down.

Children learning toileting skills benefit from clothing they can manage independently.

Prepared Environment

The classroom environment is prepared to give children opportunities to develop independence with toileting.

When appropriate, the toileting environment may include:

- Child-sized toilet or potty equipment.
- A stool for reaching the toilet or managing clothing.
- Easily accessible toileting supplies.
- A designated location for clean clothing.
- Appropriate handwashing supplies.

The environment should allow children to participate in their own care while maintaining appropriate adult supervision and sanitation.

Wiping, Flushing & Handwashing

Toileting includes learning how to properly care for the body and maintain cleanliness.

Teachers will guide children in learning appropriate wiping techniques and provide assistance when needed.

Children will also be taught to:

- Flush the toilet.
- Wash their hands with soap and water.
- Rinse their hands.
- Dry their hands.
- Properly dispose of paper towels.

Some children may be uncomfortable with the sound of flushing. Teachers may allow a child to step away from the toilet before flushing if this helps them feel comfortable.

Handwashing is an automatic part of the toileting routine, whether the child has urinated or had a bowel movement.

Accidents

Accidents are a normal part of developing toileting skills.

When an accident occurs, staff will respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Children will never be shamed, embarrassed, punished, or made to feel badly for having an accident.

When developmentally appropriate, children will be encouraged to participate in the cleanup process.

Teachers may guide the child through:

1. Recognizing that their clothing is wet or soiled.
2. Getting clean clothing.
3. Changing with assistance as needed.
4. Placing soiled clothing in the appropriate bag.
5. Washing their hands.

Wet or soiled clothing will be placed in a sealed bag and sent home. Families will be notified of accidents through GRM's communication app.

Families are responsible for replacing extra clothing after it is sent home.

GRM keeps extra clothing available for emergency use but cannot guarantee that an appropriate size will be available.

Toddler to 3K Transition

Children transitioning from the Toddler classroom to the 3K classroom must be at least 2.5 years old and fully potty trained.

For purposes of transition, fully potty trained means that the child can:

- Recognize when they need to use the bathroom.
- Get to the bathroom.
- Manage their clothing.
- Use the toilet.
- Wipe independently.
- Flush.
- Wash and dry their hands.

Occasional accidents are expected, and staff will provide assistance when needed.

If a child has a medical need that affects toilet independence, families should communicate with staff so appropriate accommodations can be discussed.

What GRM Does Not Use

GRM does not use:

- Punishment for accidents.
- Shame or embarrassment.
- Negative language surrounding toileting.
- Comparisons between children.
- Pressure to meet another child's toileting timeline.

Our approach focuses on confidence, independence, consistency, and the child's internal sense of accomplishment.

Our Goal

Our goal is not simply for children to stop wearing diapers or to use the toilet independently.

Our goal is to help children develop the skills and confidence to care for themselves independently.

Toileting is an important Practical Life experience that supports the Montessori principles of independence, concentration, coordination, confidence, and respect for the child

<u>Preschool & Elementary Bathroom Procedures (3K - 6th Grade)</u>

- Children in the 3K classroom and older are expected to be fully independent in the bathroom. This includes recognizing the need to go, undressing and dressing, wiping, flushing, and washing hands.
- If a child has a medical need that affects toilet independence, parents should communicate with staff to discuss accommodations.
- Staff will assist younger children with verbal prompts and guidance as needed but will not physically assist unless necessary.
- Classrooms have built-in bathroom breaks, including before outdoor play, and children may use the restroom as needed throughout the day.
- Only certified staff members—not volunteers—will assist students in the bathroom. Staff members will follow established supervision and privacy protocols.
- Only one child is allowed in the bathroom at a time while others wait outside.
- Classrooms have their own designated restrooms, and hygiene expectations will be reinforced consistently.

Nutrition & Feeding

At Great River Montessori, we encourage independence and respect for each child's individual needs during mealtimes. Children are supported in eating at their own pace and in the order they choose. They will never be pressured to eat specific foods, required to finish everything, or asked to eat in a particular sequence. Staff members do not track individual food intake unless it is developmentally necessary.

Families are asked to notify the school of any food allergies, sensitivities, or dietary requirements. We are committed to working in partnership with parents to honor these needs and provide safe, supportive mealtime experiences.

General Safety Guidelines

- Children are expected to sit in chairs during meals.
- Both staff and students wash their hands before eating or handling food.
- Food may not be shared between children or between staff and children.
- If food preparation or tasting is part of a classroom activity or lesson, families will be notified in advance and given the option to "opt out."

Drinking Water & Water Bottles

- Infants under six months will not be given water unless authorized by a physician.
- Older infants, toddlers, and school-aged children will be offered water several times a day, especially when outside in warm weather or in hot indoor environments.
- Families must provide a labeled water bottle for their child and ensure it is washed and sanitized regularly.
- Water bottles will be stored in each child's backpack when not in use and sent home daily.

Infant & Toddler Feeding

Individual Feeding Schedules

- Each infant and toddler follows an individualized feeding schedule developed between the family and teacher.
- Families must communicate any changes in routine.

Breastmilk, Formula, and Bottles

- Families are responsible for supplying all formula and breast milk bottles for daily feedings.
- All bottles must be labeled with the child's full name and date.

- Parents must notify staff if refrigeration is required.
- A formula container may be used if needed; unused formula will be discarded after the container's "use by" date.
- Leftover breast milk, formula, or milk from a bottle will be discarded after each feeding.
- Bottles are sent home daily for cleaning and replenishing.
- Bottles are warmed in a bottle warmer, never in a microwave.
- Infants will always be held during bottle feeding and will never be placed in cribs with bottles.
- Teachers will document feeding times and amounts in the family app.

Commercial Baby Food & Solids

- Commercial baby food containers must be covered, dated, and refrigerated. Leftovers not used within 36 hours will be discarded.
- Food served from a single-use container may not be saved for later consumption.
- Families are responsible for providing baby food for each day their child is in attendance.
- New foods must be introduced at home first; they will not be introduced for the first time at school.
- Families provide all meals/snacks in ready-to-serve portions, labeled with the child's name. Teachers may assist with warming food but will not prepare or cook meals on-site.
- Food will always be cut into developmentally appropriate sizes.

Self-Feeding

- Children are encouraged to self-feed when ready, using hands, spoons, and cups.
- Staff model respectful eating by sitting with children, supporting Montessori independence, and engaging calmly during mealtimes.
- Mealtimes are also opportunities to practice grace and courtesy, patience, and clean-up.

<u>3K, 4K, and Elementary Feeding</u>

- Mealtime and snack routines focus on independence, responsibility, and community.
- Snack routines are taught at the beginning of the year and include clear guidelines, designated seating, and self-directed preparation.
- Children may choose when to have snacks during the morning work period. A limited number of snack seats fosters patience, turn-taking, and planning.
- Practical life lessons and grace and courtesy are embedded in routines such as preparing food, serving oneself, waiting turns, and cleaning up.
- Tools such as sand timers may be used to support independence and time management.

Montessori Teachers & Assistants

The role of the teacher in a Montessori classroom is very different from that of a traditional school teacher. In Montessori education, the child is the center of attention, not the teacher. Teachers act as guides and facilitators, preparing an inviting and orderly learning environment while supporting each child in reaching their fullest potential.

Rather than leading whole-group lessons, Montessori teachers primarily work with children individually or in small groups, giving lessons when a child is ready and allowing them the freedom to explore at their own pace. Observation is an essential part of the teacher's role—by watching closely, teachers build strong relationships, recognize developmental needs, and prepare an environment that fosters growth. Teachers show respect by modeling positive, calm, and clear communication at all times.

At Great River Montessori, we are committed to offering the highest quality Montessori education possible. This requires teachers and assistants who are not only passionate and knowledgeable about child development, but also Montessori-trained or deeply familiar with Montessori philosophy.

Teaching Teams

Each classroom has a lead Montessori-trained teacher, or in training teacher, who partners with an assistant or co-teacher. Together, they create a supportive and enriching environment where children feel respected, independent, and inspired to learn. All staff members complete a thorough orientation to GRM's policies and procedures and engage in ongoing professional development to ensure they remain current in Montessori practice and childcare standards.

Training & Qualifications

All GRM teachers and assistants meet or exceed the requirements established by the State of Wisconsin and Great River Montessori. Training and certifications include (but are not limited to):

- Montessori training and/or Early Childhood Education coursework
- Wisconsin Registry certification with Early Childhood Education credits
- Education certificates or degrees in Early Childhood Education
- Infant, Child, and Adult CPR/AED certification
- First Aid procedures
- Student Records & Confidentiality
- Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention (Mandated Reporter training)
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Prevention training
- Abusive Head Trauma/Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention certification
- Bloodborne Pathogen training

- Mandatory Reporting of Threats of School Violence
- Child Guidance techniques
- Medication Administration
- Fire, Tornado, and Emergency Lockdown training
- Completion of at least 25 hours of continuing education annually

Staff Requirements

- Staff must be physically, mentally, and emotionally capable of providing responsible care for all children, including those with disabilities.
- Comprehensive reference and background checks are required prior to employment.

Teacher to Student Ratios

GRM uses the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) child-to-teacher ratios, to help determine the most effective student-to-teacher ratios. (See https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/). Ratios are subject to change based on enrollment, part-time and full-time student numbers, aligning with the Montessori philosophy, teacher referrals and needs, classroom needs, and student needs.

Expectations & Practices

Student Rights

At Great River Montessori, we believe children learn best in an environment that respects their individuality and dignity. Every child has the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- Be spoken to and spoken about respectfully at all times.
- Have confidentiality of records maintained.
- Engage in any activity that does not interfere with the safety or rights of others, as long as it aligns with the Montessori philosophy.
- Be free from being discussed in their presence unless it is for therapeutic or educational purposes.
- Participate in all aspects of the curriculum offered by the school.

Grace and Courtesy Expectations at GRM

Students at GRM are supported in learning how to care for themselves, others, and their environment. We encourage each child to:

- Take responsibility for their choices and learning, practicing honesty and integrity.
- Remain within classroom and school boundaries, always in the care of an adult.
- Use kind and respectful language that uplifts others.
- Listen carefully and respond to adult guidance.
- Care for their bodies and respect the personal space of others.
- Bring only what is needed for school, keeping personal toys at home.
- Move safely by walking indoors.
- Show respect for themselves, classmates, and classroom materials.
- Return materials to their proper place after use, leaving the environment ready for others.
- Use soft voices indoors to create a calm and peaceful learning space.
- Approach all work with focus, effort, and a willingness to do their best.

Discipline Philosophy

In Montessori education, discipline is not imposed but developed through freedom, respect, and responsibility. At GRM:

- Behaviors that show respect for oneself, others, and the environment are encouraged.
- Teachers act as guides, preparing environments that promote self-discipline, concentration, and social development.
- Children must always be respected, even during redirection.

<u>Unacceptable Behaviors</u>

- Physical harm to self, others, or the school environment/materials.
- Interfering with another child's work (unless invited).
- Mishandling or failing to return materials.

Parents and staff are partners in guiding children consistently at home and school.

<u>Staff Training Requirement</u>

All staff working with children under 5 will receive training in appropriate strategies for managing crying, fussing, or distraught children.

Positive Guidance Strategies at GRM

Our approach emphasizes positive discipline and respectful redirection. Strategies include:

- Redirection
- Mindfulness training
- Encouraging intrinsic motivation (limiting external rewards)

- “Take a break” for reflection
- Natural consequences
- Grace and courtesy lessons

Severe Behavior

Severe behaviors are defined as actions that cause physical or emotional harm to self or others. When such behavior occurs, GRM will:

1. Document the incident in the child’s record.

2. Notify parents promptly by phone or in-person meeting.

3. Convene a conference to develop a written follow-up plan with input from parents, teachers, and professionals as needed.

4. In rare cases, removal of the student from the program may be necessary to ensure safety.

Behavior Reports

For incidents of severe behavior, staff will complete a written report including:

- Child’s name and age
- Date, time, and location of behavior
- Description of behavior
- Intervention taken
- Administrative signature
- Parent notification method
- Whether a parent-teacher conference is warranted

Biting Policy

<u>Why Children Bite</u>

Biting is a natural but challenging behavior that can occur in early childhood. Children may bite when frustrated, overwhelmed, tired, teething, excited, or lacking verbal skills.

<u>GRM’s Response to Biting</u>

- Staff respond immediately, comforting and caring for the child who was bitten. The area is cleaned and treated as needed.

- Families of both children are notified promptly via app message, email, or phone call. Incident reports are completed for both parties.
- The child who bit is calmly told that biting hurts and is not acceptable. They may be briefly removed to regain control and guided toward alternative behaviors. Staff will continue to investigate any underlying reasons for the biting.

Prevention & Monitoring

Staff take proactive measures, including:

- Providing teething toys.
- Offering multiple sets of popular toys.
- Teaching sharing and turn-taking skills.
- Modeling positive social language.
- Maintaining a nurturing and calm classroom environment.

If a child bites more than twice in a week, detailed documentation begins, including triggers, interventions, and communication with families.

Family Collaboration

If biting persists for more than a month (or sooner if needed), a meeting will be held with families to create a targeted support plan. Most children outgrow biting as their communication skills improve.

If the behavior continues to pose risks despite interventions, GRM may recommend professional evaluation. In rare cases, if safety cannot be maintained, GRM may require the child to transition to another setting.

Parent & Family Partnership at GRM

Definitions of Parents & Families

At GRM, we use the terms “parent” or “parents/guardians” to mean the adult(s) legally responsible for a child. This may include biological parents, step-parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, or legal guardians.

We also recognize that family looks different for everyone. Families may include siblings, grandparents, extended relatives, or close friends who play an important role in your child’s life. Some responsibilities—such as enrollment, permission for trips, or financial accountability—belong only to a child’s legal parent/guardian.

Parents let us know who should be included as family, who may pick up their child, and who should be contacted in an emergency.

Shared Custody

We honor and respect all court-ordered custody agreements and know that shared parenting takes teamwork. Our first priority is always the well-being of your child.

- For smooth communication, we ask families to designate one parent as the primary contact for paperwork, permissions, and emergencies. That parent is expected to keep the other informed.
- GRM can provide separate financial accounts if both parents prefer, as long as the arrangement is manageable. If accounts are shared, parents are responsible for coordinating payments together.
- Unless restricted by court order, both parents have equal rights to access records and pick up their child. Staff cannot enforce custody schedules between parents.

If challenges arise that affect your child's experience at school, we may ask to meet with both parents to work toward a positive solution.

Parent Responsibilities

- Personal Belongings: Please label your child's clothing and personal items. Teachers are not able to separate or manage items based on custody arrangements.
- Home–School Connection: Children thrive when parents and teachers work together. Keeping us informed of your child's routines or changes at home helps us better support them.

Families as First Teachers

At GRM, we believe that parents are a child's first and most important teachers. You know your child best, and our teachers bring experience in child development and Montessori education. By working together, we can individualize your child's learning and honor your family's values.

Collaboration allows teachers and families to:

- Tailor the classroom experience to a child's interests and strengths.
- Support shared goals, such as independence, confidence, and academic growth.
- Build mutual understanding of child development and Montessori practice.

Parent–Teacher Partnership

Lead teachers oversee the curriculum, schedule, and classroom environment. They maintain records of each child's growth and share this information with parents.

- Parents are always welcome to visit GRM, observe, and participate in activities or field trips.
- Teachers communicate through daily reports, newsletters, our communication app, and personal conversations as needed. Infant classrooms communicate with families every three months to review routines and development.
- Conferences are held twice a year for elementary aged students, with additional meetings scheduled if helpful. Conferences are collaborative and never a place for surprises—if we have concerns, we will communicate them in advance, and we invite you to do the same.

When questions arise, please arrange to meet with teachers outside of arrival and dismissal times, as those are busy transition periods. Children should not be present for difficult or sensitive conversations. You may also email admin@greatrivermontessori.com to set up a time to talk.

Family Involvement & Communication

We view families as partners in our school community. GRM encourages parents and family members to:

- Join classroom activities, field trips, and community events.
- Attend parent meetings, observation days, and conferences.
- Participate in fundraising and school celebrations.

Please keep us informed of major changes at home—such as a move, new sibling, family illness, or loss. These events can strongly influence a child's emotions and behavior, and knowing about them helps us provide extra support when needed.

Communication Tools at GRM

At Great River Montessori, we value clear, consistent, and timely communication with families. To support this, we use several communication platforms depending on your child's program level:

Brightwheel

Brightwheel is our daily communication app for all GRM families. Through Brightwheel, you can expect to:

- Infant and Toddlers
    - Receive real-time updates on your child's day (meals, naps, diapering, etc.).

    - See notes and photos that highlight your child's activities.
    - Message teachers directly for quick questions or updates.
    - Stay informed of announcements related to your child's classroom.
    - Track attendance and transitions in and out of the classrooms.
- 3K and Older
    - See photos that highlight your child's activities.
    - Track attendance and transitions in and out of the classrooms.

Brightwheel is designed to give parents of our youngest learners peace of mind and a clear picture of their child's routines throughout the day.

Montessori Compass (3K and Older)

Families with children in 3K through Elementary programs will use Montessori Compass. This platform is designed to:

- Share classroom updates and newsletters.
- Provide progress reports and individualized learning information.
- Facilitate parent–teacher communication outside of drop-off and pick-up times.
- Support scheduling of conferences and tracking of your child's long-term growth.

Montessori Compass allows families to connect more deeply with their child's educational journey and see how Montessori lessons and activities build over time.

Monthly School-Wide Newsletter

In addition to classroom updates, GRM sends out a monthly school-wide newsletter. This newsletter highlights upcoming events, important reminders, community celebrations, and ways for families to get involved. It is designed to keep every family connected to the larger school community.

Phone Calls

Parents wishing to speak with teachers are encouraged to call between 7:30–7:50 AM or 3:15–4:00 PM, when teachers are most available. Messages left outside of these times will be delivered to the teacher, who will return your call at their earliest convenience. Please reserve calls during classroom hours for emergencies or immediate transportation changes so teachers can remain fully present with students.

Daily Take-Home Folders

Students have a folder that may include paper copies of forms, notices, or information not available online. Families are expected to check this folder regularly. Notes from parents to teachers (and vice versa) can also be sent through this folder.

Mail & Correspondence

To reduce paper use, most communication is sent via email. However, families may also correspond by mail:

Great River Montessori
315 Ryan Street
Holmen, WI 54636

Email and In-Person Communication

While these tools are our primary methods, families are always welcome to email teachers or the administrative team, or request a meeting in person. Sensitive or detailed discussions are best handled outside of arrival and dismissal times to ensure privacy and focus.

Cell Phones

To maintain a safe and focused environment for children, we ask that all cell phone use be limited while on school grounds.

- Students may not use cell phones during the school day. A classroom or office phone is always available for emergency use.
- Parents and visitors should keep phones on silent while in the building. If you need to make a call, please step outside.
- Cell phones may not be used while chaperoning field trips, volunteering in classrooms, or observing, as full attention should be given to the children. Phones may only be turned on for emergency use.
- Out of respect for student privacy, cell phones may not be used to take photos of children or school activities unless specific permission has been granted for an event.
- For the safety of students and staff, please refrain from cell phone use during drop-off and pick-up. Your full attention is needed for your child and our staff during these times.

Classroom Observation & Open Door Policy

At Great River Montessori, we welcome families into our classrooms. Observation is a vital part of the Montessori philosophy, and family visits help strengthen the partnership between home

and school. Parents and guardians are encouraged to observe their child's classroom once their child has been enrolled for at least one month.

Because our office is not staffed full-time, we ask that you contact the office to schedule your visit in advance. This allows us to maintain a calm learning environment and ensure that observation guidelines are followed.

We also encourage families to raise both gratitude and concerns with respectful communication, as this helps maintain a safe, healthy, and collaborative community. If you would like to schedule a meeting with a teacher or administrator, please make an appointment so we can give you our full attention.

Observation Procedure

- Sign in at the main office and review observation guidelines.
- When you enter the class, you will find a designated adult chair positioned for observation without disrupting the classroom.
- Children (including your own) may greet you. A polite hello and a brief response are fine, but then gently encourage the child to return to their work.
- Please remain seated during your observation. If you have questions, save them for after the observation when you may speak privately with the teacher.
- A 20–25 minute observation is sufficient to gain an understanding of the classroom environment.
- When leaving, keep goodbyes brief and positive to help your child transition smoothly.
- Sign out at the main office before leaving.
- All observations of students are confidential. Please respect the privacy of other children and only discuss your own child with staff at an appropriate time, away from students.

Additional Observers

GRM also hosts visitors from other Montessori schools, teacher-training programs, prospective families, and community members. These individuals follow the same observation guidelines to ensure respect for our students and classrooms.

Observations are a wonderful way to see Montessori in action, understand how the environment supports independence and concentration, and witness the joy of children engaged in purposeful work.

Volunteers at Great River Montessori (GRM)

GRM values community involvement and encourages families and community members to share their time and talents with our school. Volunteers strengthen our partnerships, enrich the classroom experience, and support student learning in meaningful ways.

Definition of a Volunteer

A volunteer is any individual age 18 or older who offers their time or services to GRM and its students without pay.

Volunteer Expectations

Volunteers enhance the learning environment by:

- Sharing skills, talents, or expertise.
- Providing classroom support and preparing materials.
- Reading aloud or assisting with lessons.
- Supporting school events, field trips, and facility projects.
  Volunteers may not replace GRM staff but may assist and reinforce classroom activities.

Volunteer Requirements

- All volunteers must be pre-approved by administration.
- Volunteers must sign in and out at the main office, review guidelines, and wear a badge while on school premises, field trips, or events.
- Volunteers must always remain under the supervision of a GRM employee and may never be alone with students.
- Confidentiality must be maintained regarding all student, family, and staff information.
- Photography of students or staff requires prior administrative approval.
- Volunteers may not be under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed substances while at GRM.
- All volunteers must review and acknowledge GRM's volunteer policy before participating.

Selection & Notification

- Field trip and event volunteer opportunities will be shared with families via email.
- Regular or consistent classroom volunteer roles will be announced in school-wide communications.

Supervision & Conduct

All volunteers are supervised by GRM staff. Any misconduct will be reported to administration, and volunteer privileges may be revoked at any time.

Donations

At times, classroom teachers may request additional or project-specific donations from families. These may include supplies, materials for classroom projects, or seasonal needs. Participation is always optional, but donations are greatly appreciated and help enrich the learning environment.

Clothing & Dress Code

At GRM, children learn independence and self-respect through mastering everyday skills such as dressing themselves. Because gross motor development is an important part of the Montessori curriculum, children need clothing and shoes that allow them to move freely, safely, and confidently.

Shoes

- Children must keep a pair of inside shoes at school.
- Inside shoes must be supportive and non-slip. If sandals or slippers are worn, they must have rubber soles or grips.
- If a child arrives in unsafe shoes, they will not be able to participate in activities such as recess or Creative Movement.

Everyday Clothing

- Choose comfortable, loose-fitting clothing that your child can manage independently. Large buttons, easy zippers, velcro, and elastic waistbands support self-dressing.
- Styles should be simple, inexpensive, and washable. Children often work with paint, water, and food, so clothing may get messy even with aprons.
- Shorts or tights are required under skirts and dresses.
- Jewelry is discouraged as it can create safety risks (choking, abrasions, distractions).
- Clothing that displays violent or inappropriate images or language is not permitted.

Extra Clothing

- Each child must keep at least one full change of clothes at school (including socks and undergarments), labeled with their name.
- Families should check and update extra clothing seasonally. These items are used in case of toileting accidents, spills, or messy play.
- Classroom teachers may have additional requirements for extra clothing, appropriate for each child’s age.

Winter Clothing

- All winter gear must be labeled, including coats, jackets, snow pants, boots, mittens, hats, and scarves.
- A pair of snow pants may remain at school on your child's hook, and extra mittens can be stored in your child's cubby.
- Students are required to wear at least a light jacket until temperatures consistently reach 60°F.
- Boots and snow pants are required when snow is on the ground, when temperatures are cold, or when the playground is wet and muddy.
- Please consider your child's independence when selecting outerwear—items with velcro or easy fasteners are strongly recommended.

Toys from Home

Comfort toys and family photographs can help a child feel more secure away from home. Other toys from home can create problems at school and are to be left at home, unless specified by the teacher. If you are wondering about what your child can bring to school, and what should stay home, talk to your child's teacher.

School Readiness & Supply Lists

Infants, Toddlers, and 3K Children's House

Once your child is accepted into the Infant, Toddler, or 3K program, you will receive a detailed supply list prior to their first day. This list includes essential consumable materials, classroom supplies, and personal items needed to support your child's daily success.

4K Children's House, Kindergarten, E1, E2, and Homeschool Co-Op

At the start of each school year, families will receive a supply list outlining the items required for the year. These include consumable materials, individual and group supplies, and other essentials. Supplies may be brought during Open House or on the first day of school.

Everyday Preparedness

To ensure a positive and successful day, please help your child arrive prepared both mentally and physically. This includes:

- Having a nutritious breakfast at home and being well-rested.
- Bringing a take-home folder, snacks and lunch, and a filled water bottle.

- For infants and toddlers, providing daily bottles or feeding supplies as needed.

As children grow, they will gradually develop greater independence in preparing for their school day.

Cubby

Your child is assigned a cubby. This is where his/her outdoor gear, nap time materials, backpack, shoes, and lunch is kept. Space is tight; please do your best to only bring what your child needs for the day in order to allow enough space for everyone. If you are late, please speak quietly in this area as you help your child prepare to enter the classroom.

Calendar and Special Events

GRM will distribute a calendar throughout the year via email. The calendar can also be found in the main office, and on the website. The calendar will indicate important events, school closings, teacher work days, etc. Teachers will also inform families of any special events happening in their individual classrooms.

Holiday and Birthday Celebrations

GRM honors a variety of cultures and traditions as part of our educational philosophy. We invite parents to come visit and present traditions from their families and backgrounds to the children. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher.

We find the excessive commercialism in our culture surrounding many holidays distracts and often confuses children. As a result, we may downplay or prohibit certain practices. For example, Halloween costumes are prohibited at school because they can be frightening to many young children. Instead, we discuss the origins of customs, show artifacts relating to celebrations, share a meal or a song, etc.

Each child and their family will be able to participate in a birthday celebration for their child. The specifics of this celebration will be provided when the celebration is scheduled. Health standards require commercially prepared goods only. This standard protects children with allergies and ensures that foods consumed at school are prepared according to local health department specifications.

Field Trips

When completing your initial child registration form, you will have the option to permit your child to accompany the class on regular neighborhood outings, such as walks to the closest nearby park or taking a bus to a community member’s local business. Parents will receive notification of any field trip in advance. If you did not authorize field trips in your enrollment

paperwork, you will have a chance to authorize trips on a trip-by-trip basis. Your regular school hours will remain the same on days of field trips. We are not able to include children who aren't registered with our center. Note that our teachers always bring along cell phones and can be reached at any point during a trip. Travel details for any field trips will be included on separate permission slips.

Field Trip Procedures

1. Student Supervision & Accountability
    - Each adult chaperone will be assigned a specific group of students and provided with a roster including student names and photos.
    - A headcount will be conducted before boarding the bus. Once on the bus, staff will verify each student's presence by calling their name, requiring a verbal response, and visually confirming their presence. This process will be repeated before departure at each location.
2. Identification & Safety Measures
    - All students will wear rubber bracelets labeled with "Great River Montessori" and emergency contact numbers for Ms. Sam and Ms. Q.
    - GRM staff will wear school apparel whenever possible. Families are encouraged to dress their children in GRM apparel if available.
    - A designated GRM staff member, who is not assigned a specific group, will conduct walk-throughs throughout the trip to ensure all students are accounted for.
3. Transportation
    - All students and adults must ride the bus to and from the field trip.
    - Families will not be permitted to transport their child to or from the field trip location to ensure accurate tracking and student safety.

On site demonstrations are times where we invite parents and community members into the school to give a special sharing session. Examples of these sessions could be learning the parts of a bicycle from a parent bike expert, learning about dragonflies from a parent naturalist, learning about toothbrushing from a nearby dentist office, learning about mail from our postal carrier, etc. If you have knowledge that you think might be appropriate, please let our staff know; we are happy to work with you to schedule a demonstration.

Water Play

At GRM, children are provided with opportunities for water and sand play both indoors and outdoors, particularly during summer-care. These activities are an important part of the Montessori experience, as they support exploration, discovery, and cooperative learning. Through water and sand play, children:

- Explore mathematical concepts such as mass, volume, and measurement

- Learn about sensory concepts including warm and cool, wet and dry, heavy and light
- Develop pre-writing and pre-reading skills by creating patterns and symbols
- Engage in cooperative activities and problem-solving with peers
- Strengthen fine motor coordination and stimulate sensory development

Guidelines for Water Play

- Water play is available during scheduled outdoor time when weather permits. Staff use discretion to ensure conditions are appropriate and will change children into dry clothing if needed.
- Children must wash their hands before playing at a water table.
- At the end of each day, water tables and materials are emptied and sanitized.

Outdoor Water Play

At times, especially during summer-care, children may have outdoor water play opportunities such as sprinklers. Families will be notified in advance and informed of any supplies needed from home. Children without the required supplies will not be able to participate.

Attendance, Arrival, and Departure

Attendance and Student Tracking

- Daily attendance is taken and available to parents upon request.
- GRM uses Brightwheel to track arrivals, dismissals, and child movement throughout the building.
- Teachers conduct face-to-face roll calls whenever children transition between locations to ensure safety and ratio compliance.
- Families provide predicted drop-off and pick-up times at the start of the year and must notify teachers of changes.

Absences and Tardiness

- Regular attendance supports Montessori's uninterrupted work cycle and consistency in routine.
- Parents must notify the classroom teacher by 8:00 AM if a child will be absent. If no contact is made, GRM will send an email.
- Tardiness disrupts classroom flow; families are encouraged to arrive on time daily.
- Wisconsin law requirement: 4K–6th grade students should not exceed 10 absences per school year. Administration will contact families if this occurs.

- Vacation absences must be discussed directly with teachers. Tuition and fees remain due.
- Illness: children with fever or other symptoms must stay home.
- Medical/dental appointments: notify GRM in advance and provide a doctor's note upon return.
- Consistent attendance in infant–3K programs is especially important to support secure attachments.

Follow-Up for Missed Drop-Offs

If a child has not arrived by their usual time (or 9:00 AM), staff will attempt to contact families to check on well-being. Staff will also call if a child remains past contracted pick-up time. Families must keep contact information current.

Arrival and Departure Times

Infant, Toddler, and 3K

- Year-round, 7:00 AM–5:00 PM.
- Arrival by 9:00 AM is encouraged for consistent routines.
- Must be picked up by 5:00 PM.

4K–6th Grade & Homeschool Co-op

- Follows the academic school year calendar.
- Arrival begins at 7:50 AM (without before-care).
- Students should be in class by 8:10 AM.
- Pick-up by 3:10 PM (without after-care).
- Part-time students dismissed by 12:00 PM.

Early/Late Care Fees

- Students dropped off early or picked up late will be charged the hourly rate for their program.
- Late pick-up: after 10 minutes, a $9.50/day drop-in fee applies.
- After-care late: $1.50 per 5 minutes after 5:00 PM.

Drop-Off Procedures

Infant & Toddler Program

- Enter through the main doors with security code.
- Children must be awake upon arrival; staff will ask parents to wake sleeping children.
- Arrival by 9:00 AM is strongly encouraged.

3K and Older

- Parents will walk children to their classroom.
- Staff greet children and help them transition independently.
- Routine fosters responsibility (hanging coats, indoor shoes, belongings).
- Consistent, brief drop-offs build self-confidence.
- Late Arrival
    - If your child is arriving late to school, please walk them to the classroom door and communicate with the teacher before dropping off.

Pick-Up Procedures

Outdoor Pick-Up (Weather Permitting)

- Parents enter through the main entrance, proceed to the playground entrance, and are greeted by a teacher.
- Teachers release children directly to parent.
- Families may not enter nor exit through the playground gate.

Indoor Pick-Up

- Infants, toddlers, and 3K: picked up from their classrooms.
- 4K–6th grade: escorted by staff to meet parents in the parking lot.
- Teachers will make eye contact and say goodbye before releasing a child.
- If your 4k or older student participates in after-care, parents will pick them up in the classroom.

General Safety

- Children cannot be left unattended anywhere on GRM grounds.
- Siblings may not remain in vehicles unattended during drop-off/pick-up.
- Children are not permitted in classrooms outside of scheduled hours.

Security and Safety Policies

- All exterior doors and playground gates remain locked at all times.
- Families, visitors, and staff must enter/exit through the main entrance with a code or staff escort.
- Doors cannot be propped open (arrival, dismissal, or recess).
- Visitors must check in and should not be allowed in unless verified.
- Doors can always be opened quickly from the inside for fire safety.
- Staff are trained in emergency procedures (fire drills, lockdowns, evacuations).
- Malfunctioning locks or suspicious activity must be reported immediately.
- Students are not permitted to open exterior doors for anyone.

Child Pick-Up Authorization

- Only individuals listed on the authorized pick-up form may pick up children.
- Families must keep authorization lists current.
- Written permission (in person or by email) is required for any unlisted pick-up person.
- Staff may request a photo ID at any time.
- Children will not be released to unauthorized individuals.
- If unable to reach a parent, staff will contact emergency contacts until resolved.
- If no one arrives within 30 minutes of closing, GRM is required to notify social services.
- Families must provide legal documentation and a photo of restricted individuals if custody or court orders apply.

Transportation

GRM does not provide transportation. However, 4K and older students within the Holmen School District boundaries may be eligible for Holmen School District transportation. Parents should contact the district directly for eligibility and arrangements.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Great River Montessori school (GRM) values diversity among its students and admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. Further, we will not discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, mental or physical condition or disability in the administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Students with Special Needs

GRM serves children with special needs whenever possible. Any eligible applicant with special needs or handicapping conditions will be enrolled in the program if, after careful evaluation of the child's care needs and the school's capabilities to meet these needs, it is felt that the child can participate in and benefit from the program/services the school offers and the school can make reasonable accommodation to provide safe care to this child, as well as to the other enrolled children, should this child be enrolled. GRM works collaboratively with the school district it resides in to assure all of these needs are able to be met.

The emotional and physical well-being of all children at all times is the foundation of a Montessori classroom. All children are enrolled at GRM on a provisional basis. It is possible that a particular child may not adjust or be suited to the Montessori environment. If this occurs, and if in the judgment of the teacher and administration, or the parent/guardian, the child is not benefiting from the Montessori experience, and/or is interfering with the class function, the parent/guardian may be instructed, or instruct the school, to withdraw the child.

As children grow and develop, so does the possibility of disabilities to morph and change, presenting new challenges. If a child requires an intervention therapist to enter our classroom and/or the child is working with other therapists outside of school, scheduled meetings with the teacher, administration, family, and therapist(s) may be required, and, depending on the school district's involvement, could be at the family's expense.

Photograph and Social Media

GRM policy defines a student's photograph as "Student Directory Information" and thus is public information, unless you provide the appropriate notification to the school that you would not like this information to be public. If your child's information is public, for example, your child's photo and name may appear in school pictures and classroom publications. Also, should your student or school receive a public honor or recognition, the school would provide your child's school picture to the honoring organization and/or media upon request. The school does also have a website, Facebook page, and print media that your student's picture or work may be displayed on.

Each child must have a media form on file at the beginning of each year that will provide or deny permission for the following media purposes:

1. During the school year, the media may visit your child's school, with school permission and parents notified in advance, to cover special events and may want to interview, videotape or photograph your child.
2. GRM may also wish to use your child's photograph, voice, likeness or student work for promotional and educational reasons, such as in publications, posters, brochures,

newsletters and videos; on the school websites; on local cable television channels; or at community events (e.g. expos or fundraisers).

3. GRM does have a presence in social media to keep parents and the community informed about the school and upcoming events and may use a child's photograph, videotape, or special projects on their school Facebook page or public website.

Outdoor Policy

Being outdoors in a natural environment is a key part of Montessori education and a child's health. Students will go outside multiple times throughout their school day. Students will be outdoors for recess as long as weather permits. If your child is well enough to attend school, s/he is well enough to go outside.

Children must always have appropriate clothes for outdoors. During cold months, please be sure your child has a hat, warm coat, mittens or gloves, boots, and snow pants, so that they can enjoy outdoor time. We suggest supplying your child with two pairs of mittens or gloves. Please label all items with your child's name. Some weather conditions prohibit outdoor activities. Students will not go outdoors when the temperature is ten degrees Fahrenheit or below or in conditions that the classroom teacher determines to be too severe.

Our curriculum and nature studies include experiencing a variety of seasons, studying seasonal weather patterns, and learning about their effects. Therefore, students may at times experience rain and will require rain boots and rain jackets. Please provide them with appropriate outerwear no matter the weather.

Inclement Weather Closures and Related Emergency Procedures

Our goal is to notify families at least 24 hours in advance of any anticipated closures due to inclement weather, particularly in the case of a major snow or ice storm. However, there may be situations where advanced notice is not possible. All families will be notified via email as soon as a decision is made. If you do not receive an email regarding a weather-related closure, please assume the center is open. Closure announcements may also be posted on our Facebook page and shared with local news outlets when possible.

Weather-Related Closures and Delays

Great River Montessori serves children from infancy through elementary, and we use the decisions of surrounding school districts and childcare centers as a reference when determining weather-related closures or delays. While we are not strictly tied to any single district's decision, their guidance helps inform ours- especially with the school-aged children due to bussing. Our school aged children may have different closures and delays as our infant and toddler programs.

Temperature Threshold

GRM may close if the wind chill is -25°F or lower, in the interest of safety for both families and staff.

Delayed Start

In the event of a delay, adjusted arrival times will be communicated to families as early as possible via email. Certain programming, such as morning-only sessions, may be canceled depending on the circumstances.

Early Closings

If weather conditions worsen during the day, families may be asked to pick up their child(ren) early. A formal announcement will be sent via email, with updates also shared on social media and/or local news stations when possible.

Severe Weather During the Day

If an emergency such as a tornado warning or fire arises during school hours, our team will follow practiced emergency procedures. Children are gently prepared for these situations during regularly scheduled drills and may wish to talk about them at home afterward.

Possession of Firearms and Dangerous Weapons on School Grounds

It is a felony for a person to knowingly possess a firearm (concealed or otherwise) on the grounds of a school. Wis. Stat. § 948.605(2)(a).

It is a forfeiture for a person to knowingly possess a firearm (concealed or otherwise) at a place that the person knows or has reasonable cause to believe is within 1,000 feet of the grounds of a school. Wis. Stat. § 948.605(2)(a).

Exceptions

There are a number of exceptions to the restrictions on possessing a firearm in or on school grounds or within 1,000 feet of school grounds. It is lawful to possess a firearm in or on the grounds of a school or within 1,000 feet of the grounds of a school as follows:

- On private property that is not part of school grounds. Wis. Stat. § 948.605(2)(b)1m and 18 USC 922(q)(2)(B)(i).

- By a law enforcement officer acting in his or her official capacity. Wis. Stat. § 948.605(2)(b)1m and 18 USC 922(q)(2)(B)(vi).
- The firearm is not loaded and is encased or in a locked firearms rack that is on a motor vehicle. Wis. Stat. § 948.605(2)(b)3a and b.
- By a state-certified commission warden acting in his or her official capacity. Wis. Stat. § 948.605(2)(b)2m.
- By a person who is a CCW licensee or out-of-state CCW licensee may possess a firearm within 1,000 feet of the grounds of a school, but not in or on school grounds. Wis. Stat. § 948.605(2)(b)1r.

Other weapons

It is a crime to possess a dangerous weapon (other than a firearm or BB or pellet gun) on or in any school building, school grounds, recreation area, athletic field or any other property owned, used or operated for school administration. Wis. Stat. § 948.61.

Emergency Preparedness & Procedures

Evacuation Drills

GRM practices monthly fire and tornado drills to ensure staff and children are prepared for emergency situations. These drills may bring up curiosity or strong emotions in children; families are encouraged to have calm and reassuring conversations at home. Families will be notified prior to drills whenever possible.

Emergency Procedures

All staff are trained in emergency plans and procedures during onboarding. This training ensures staff remain calm, collected, and ready to act in the event of an emergency.

Evacuation, Off-Site Assembly, Relocation, & Reunification

- Purpose: Evacuations may be required for fire, structural failure, flooding, bomb threats, or hazardous materials.
- Process:
    - Students and staff evacuate to the safe meeting location.
    - 9-1-1 is contacted immediately.
    - Attendance is taken at both the first evacuation area and the relocation site.
    - Families are notified once children are fully evacuated and safe.
- Reunification:
    - Families may be asked to pick up children at a reunification site.

    - Children will only be released to individuals listed in their records.
    - Staff remain with children until all are safely picked up.
- Infants, Toddlers & Special Needs:
  Evacuation cribs/strollers and individualized evacuation plans are used as appropriate.

Lockdown & Shelter-in-Place

- Circumstances: Severe weather (e.g., tornado, severe thunderstorm) or human-caused emergencies (e.g., armed intruder).
- Process:
    - Children and staff move to designated safe areas.
    - Attendance is taken immediately.
    - 9-1-1 is contacted to provide details of the situation.
    - The group remains in shelter until given clearance by emergency services.
- Infants, Toddlers & Special Needs:
  Emergency cribs and individualized plans are used to ensure safe relocation.

Post-Emergency Procedures

- Staff assess for injuries and hazards (e.g., fallen power lines, structural issues).
- First Aid/CPR is administered as needed.
- Parents are contacted as soon as possible, with the understanding that communication systems may be disrupted.
- Standard evacuation, relocation, and reunification procedures are followed until all children are safely released to families.

Health & Safety Policies

Communicable Diseases

- Any child suspected of having a communicable disease will be separated from others until picked up.
- Children with contagious illnesses must stay home until they are no longer contagious.
- Families must notify GRM of such illnesses so we can alert other families if needed.

Student Health Criteria for Exclusion

Children should stay home if their illness:

- Prevents them from participating comfortably in school activities.

- Requires care beyond what staff can provide.
- Poses a possible risk of spreading illness to others.

Children must remain home if they have:

- A fever of 100°F or higher within the past 24 hours (without medication).
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours.
- Severe nasal or chest congestion.
- An unidentified rash.
- Symptoms of a contagious condition such as pink eye, strep throat, chickenpox, measles, impetigo, scabies, lice, ringworm, or COVID-19.
- A member of their household has any of the above symptoms.

Note: Children must be fever-free and symptom-free without medication for at least 24 hours before returning.

If illness or lice are suspected during the day, parents will be called and asked to pick up within 60 minutes. If unreachable, emergency contacts will be called.

Medication Administration

General Guidelines

- No medication (oral, topical, drops, vitamins, or supplements) may be administered unless in the original packaging and accompanied by a completed Medication Administration Permission Form.
- Children may not carry or self-administer any medication, including lip balm, sunscreen, or cough drops.
- All medication administration is documented in a log that includes the time, dosage, and staff initials.

Prescription Medications

- Must be provided in the original pharmacy-labeled container with: child's name, medication name, dosage/frequency, date filled, and expiration date.
- Pharmaceutical samples must remain in original packaging with physician instructions.
- Medication may only be administered to the child for whom it was prescribed.
- Parent authorization is valid for the prescription duration or up to 6 months for chronic conditions, whichever is shorter.

Emergency Medications

- Families must provide emergency medications (e.g., inhalers, EpiPens, Diastat).
- A signed Medical Action Plan from a healthcare provider must accompany all emergency medications.
- Emergency medications are kept unlocked, easily accessible to staff, but out of children's reach (at least 5 feet high).
- Staff receive annual training in emergency medication administration.

Over-the-Counter Medications

- GRM does not administer OTC medications for acute illness or pain (Tylenol, ibuprofen, cough syrup, etc.). Children with these symptoms must remain home.
- OTC medications may only be given if prescribed by a healthcare professional for a chronic condition (e.g., allergy action plans).
- OTC medications must be in original packaging, labeled with the child's name, and accompanied by a Medication Administration Permission Form signed by both parent and physician.

Topical Creams, Sunscreen, & Mosquito Repellent

- Parents may provide standing authorization (valid for 12 months) for diaper cream, teething gel, lotion, powder, sunscreen, or mosquito repellent.
- A Topical Medication Permission Form is required.
- Staff will apply sunscreen in the afternoon with parental permission.
- All sunscreen and mosquito repellent must be supplied in the original container.
- Parents/guardians who have additional concerns are encouraged to dress children in long sleeves and pants for extra protection.

Minor Injuries & Emergency Procedures

- Staff are trained in CPR, first aid, and emergency care.
- Minor injuries (scrapes, bumps) will be treated on site, and families notified via an Accident/Injury Report.
- Head injuries require immediate parent notification.
- If a medical emergency occurs:
    1. Qualified staff provide first aid.
    2. Parents/emergency contacts are notified.
    3. Emergency medical services are contacted if needed.
    4. If necessary, the child will be transported by ambulance or emergency vehicle to the facility listed on their emergency form.

Documentation & Records

Staff maintain written records of:

- Accidents, injuries, and first aid provided.
- Behavioral incidents requiring intervention.
- Medication administration.

Reports are shared with families and kept in the child's file.

Additional Health & Safety Measures

- All staff complete background checks and required trainings, including CPR/first aid, shaken baby prevention, safe handling of bodily fluids, and child abuse reporting.
- Lead teachers are Montessori certified or in the process of certification.
- Visual lice checks may be performed at times of increased risk. Children must be nit-free to return to class.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

We at GRM take the safety and cleanliness of our school seriously.

Children are instructed to wash their hands with soap and water before handling food and after toileting. Teachers may help children with the hand washing process and stress its importance. Staff members also wash their hands with soap and water frequently, and especially after assisting children with toileting or after assisting an ill child.

Disposable gloves are used for changing soiled clothing, first-aid, and bathroom cleanup. Wet or soiled clothing will be changed promptly and sent home in a plastic bag. Please remember to replace your child's extra set of clothing. GRM does keep extra clothing on hand for emergency use but cannot guarantee proper sizes will be available.

All tables and food preparation/serving areas are sanitized. Cleaning materials are washed on a regular basis by staff. Disinfecting wipes may also be used on surfaces.

Naptime bedding should be taken home and washed every other week. Staff will put bedding in a bag and send it home with your child at the end of every two weeks. Please remember to bring it back, washed and clean, on the next scheduled school day.

Physical Examination

All children shall have an initial physical examination not more than one year prior to nor later than three months after their first day of attendance. The Child Health Report Form must be

signed and dated by a licensed medical professional. Each child shall have a subsequent physical examination by a physician at least once every two years.

Employees are trained to do daily health screenings along with a record of the teachers' concerns.

The daily screenings include the following:

- Changes in usual behavior or appearance;
- Taking the child's temperature with a thermometer, if there are changes in the child's behavior or appearance,
- Skin rashes, itchy skin, or lice/nits (during a lice outbreak);
- Complaints of pain or not feeling well;
- Other signs or symptoms of illness (including drainage from eyes, vomiting, and diarrhea); and
- Reported illness or injury to the child since the last day of attendance.

Immunizations

An Immunization Record Form must be on file for each child. This immunization history must indicate immunizations the child has received or that the immunization requirement is to be waived for that child by a compliance alternative. An electronic printout from the Wisconsin Immunization Registry or other registry maintained by a healthcare provider may be used in place of the Immunization Record Form.

Children who have not received subsequent doses of vaccine appropriate to their age must receive such subsequent doses within one year of the first day of attendance and must notify GRM in writing as each dose is received. Immunization requirements are waived upon signature of the parent/guardian on the Immunization Record Form.

Smoking, Vaping, and Alcohol Use Policy

The State of Wisconsin prohibits smoking in any child care facility and in any indoor or outdoor area of the center where children are allowed, on any day the center is in operation, regardless of whether children are present. GRM maintains a smoke-free environment at all times. Additionally, GRM prohibits the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, smoking, and vaping on school premises with the exception of drugs used as medication and prescribed by a physician.

Allergies

Parents are required to make Great River Montessori aware of any and all known allergies as is requested during the enrollment process. If your child has a life-threatening allergy, please notify the GRM administration upon enrollment and/or upon discovery of allergy.

In the case of allergies, GRM requires the following medical documents:

- Physician identification of allergen(s).
- Physician-prescribed treatment that can be administered by a non-medical professional.

GRM may make reasonable accommodations for specific allergies on a case-by-case basis in consultation with parents and in accordance with physician guidelines. Please keep in mind that while GRM may make every effort to prevent a child from coming into contact with an allergen, these preventive efforts are not foolproof in a school environment with small children, family members, and volunteers present throughout the day.

Child Abuse/Neglect

The health and safety of the students attending GRM are our top priority. If a staff member suspects abuse or neglect of any child in our care, our team is required to report it to Child Protective Services in accordance with section 767.11.

Please also be aware that staff members cannot release children to individuals who appear to be impaired. If our team has reason to believe that any family member or guardian picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, an emergency contact will be called to pick up the child and the incident will be reported.

No person making a report under these criteria may be discharged from employment for doing so. To make a report, the staff member will contact, by telephone, the County Department of Social Services, the Child Protection Agency or the Police Department. All suspicions of abuse will be documented and kept on file at the center, including the name, address, age, and sex of the child involved and the type of abuse or neglect suspected.

Definition of abuse and neglect as stated by law

- Abuse refers to any physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means, including sexual intercourse or sexual contact.
- Physical injury includes, but is not limited to, severe bruising, lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, or any injury contributing great bodily harm.
- A neglected child refers to a child whose parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other persons exercising temporary or permanent control over the child neglects, refuses, or is unable, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical, or dental care or shelter, so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.

Any parent or guardian who has reason to suspect abuse by a school staff member should report his/her concern to the County Department of Social Services, the Child Protection Agency, or the Police Department.

Classroom Pet Policy

To assist in the development of care and responsibility, classrooms may choose to have a classroom pet. All classroom activity involving a pet will be directly supervised by the teacher. All pets and their habitats (bowl, cage, etc.) will be kept clean. Each classroom will advise parents of classroom pets. If there is a special event where an animal will be present, parents will be advised ahead of time. Please let staff know of any pet allergies your child may have.

Insurance

Great River Montessori does not provide health or accident insurance coverage for students. Families are responsible for all medical expenses resulting from injuries or accidents that occur at school or during school-sponsored activities and events. We encourage families to maintain their own health and accident insurance for their children.

Babysitting

Our staff members are highly trained, wonderful people and are often the people that know your child best, next to you. Any arrangement between a family and a GRM employee for employment or services outside the program and services of GRM is an individual endeavor and private matter, not connected or sanctioned by GRM.

Organizational Structure and Guidelines

The Board of Directors consists of the Great River Montessori Community: faculty or staff, community members, and/or parents. GRM is a Wisconsin 501(c)(3) Not-For-Profit Corporation, licensed as a Charitable Organization. The School Leadership Team operates the school on a daily basis, guided by a Board of Directors.

Decision-Making Processes

The School Leadership Team makes decisions related to aspects and quality of care and education. The Board of Directors and the School Leadership Team collaboratively make large-scale financial decisions, review policies, and plan future strategy after consultation with the staff and parent/guardian body. Specific responsibilities and composition of the Board of Directors is detailed in the Bylaws. Board meeting minutes are available upon request.

Bylaws

Copies of the school’s Bylaws are available to parents upon request.

Grievance Procedure

- Any matter concerning a child, the facility, or a teacher must be brought to the attention of that child's teacher before all else. Teachers are afforded the first opportunity to offer explanation and/or resolution to the parents.
- The School Leadership Team must then be informed by the parent/guardian and/or teacher and is responsible to intervene in such cases where parents and teachers cannot come to an agreement.
- If either party is not satisfied with the solution, they may submit a grievance form for review. Families and staff must follow these steps, as they are crucial to resolving disparities with good grace.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meet quarterly with the goal of meeting one evening per month at the school (unless otherwise posted). If you are interested in serving the school as a member of the Board of Directors, please contact the School Leadership Team prior to the annual business meeting held in May or June of each school year.

Great River Montessori Family Handbook Signature Page

Please read the GRM Family Handbook on our website (www.greatrivermontessori.com) or ask for a paper copy in the school office. Sign and return this form to GRM before the start of the school term.

- I have received and read the Great River Montessori Family Handbook.
- I understand and agree to abide by the policies and procedures stated within.
- I understand that GRM may implement or change policies as needed, and that I will be notified of such changes.

Parent/Guardian 1:

Name (print):_____

Signature: _____ Date:_____

Parent/Guardian 2:

Name (print):_____

Signature: _____ Date:_____

The Great River Montessori school (GRM) values diversity among our students and admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. Further, we will not discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, mental or physical condition or disability in the administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.