



*Center Montessori School*

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**PARENT GUIDE 2020/2021**

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## **WELCOME**

Welcome to the 2020/2021 school year. Center Montessori School (CMS) is an active community of educators and families who have come together to provide an optimal educational environment that fosters sound growth and development of the child. CMS cultivates and honors a student's innate love of learning as the student prepares for a life of purpose, integrity, and academic accomplishment. We thank you for joining us and entrusting your child's education to us.

This handbook is intended to clarify for you the policies and procedures that not only ensure the stability of the school but more importantly, provide an emotionally and physically safe environment for our students. We hope this handbook will be helpful to you and we encourage you to bring any questions you have directly to your child's teacher or our administrator. It is our intention that this information will enhance our communication and hopefully prevent misunderstandings, while providing an important element of mutual respect between parents and our professional staff. Classroom teachers have additional information about their classes that they will share with you during Orientation and Back to School Night.

We congratulate you for having chosen the Montessori approach for your child. Perhaps it was the child-centered philosophy of Maria Montessori that interested you, or the opportunity for your child to work independently through discovery that caught your interest. Or maybe it was your hope for your child to become confident in his/her academic pursuits that led you to our school. Whatever brought you to this point, we welcome you and your family to our Montessori community. We are here to help you understand the Montessori method of education and to support your decision for your child. And once again, welcome to Center Montessori School.

We, of course, are currently living through a pandemic with COVID-19. As a result, there are procedures and activities described in this handbook which do not apply at this time. We have attached a COVID-19 Addendum to Parent Guide to this handbook which addresses some, but not all of the current temporary changes. If you have any additional questions or need further information, please contact Administration.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of Center Montessori School is to educate children by subordinating teaching to learning so that children are empowered to continue to educate themselves throughout their lifetimes. We strive to provide intellectually stimulating, unlimited learning opportunities in a physically and emotionally safe environment. Our learning environment is respectful of the whole child and encourages the child to become academically competent, culturally enriched, socially adept, emotionally secure, and physically fit according to the child's potential.

## **ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT**

CMS has a very real commitment to diversity in its student body. We want to bring together a diverse student population with regard to race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and religion. We encourage this diversity so as to expand our students' perspectives of the world through friendships, mutual respect, and understanding. Consequently in matters of admission policies, Center Montessori does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin, or religion.

### **Enrollment Contract**

At the time of enrollment, parents sign a legally binding contract agreeing to pay tuition for the full school year. The deposit and materials fees are non-refundable. Refer to your contract for payment plans.

### **Placement of Students**

The Administration together with the teachers undertakes a thoughtful and detailed process for determining classroom placement.

### **Withdrawal Policy**

Center Montessori reserves the right to require a parent to withdraw a child from the school if it is the opinion of the Center that either the child or the parents are not adhering to the policies of the school or if the Center determines that withdrawal is in the best interests of the child. In the case a family must withdraw their child, the procedure described on the enrollment papers will be followed.

## **PROGRAMS**

### **The Nest**

The Nest is a toddler program for children from the age of 18 months to 3 years old. Children are introduced to the Montessori academic curriculum including practical life, sensorial, language, math, social studies, art, and music.

### **Primary**

The Primary program is for children ages 3 through 6 years old. The classic Montessori curriculum includes reading and mathematics lessons, as well as instruction in geography, science, music, culture and the arts.

## **Elementary 1**

This program is for 6 to 9-year old children. The curriculum includes language arts, math, geometry, botany, zoology, cultural studies, art, physical education and music.

## **Elementary 2**

The Elementary 2 program is for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5th grade students. It is a more complex program that naturally builds on the Elementary 1 curriculum. Students have lessons in math, including geometry and algebra, more complex grammar concepts, creative and analytical writing, history, art, science, physical education and music.

## **Level 3**

Sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are the Level 3 program. These students experience a true Montessori middle school curriculum, covering subjects in depth, including expanded critical and free writing projects, math studies, history, and science, presented as part of overall thematic study. Community service and work on the school's land lab are also components of their education. Additionally, these students are exposed to traditional educational concepts including homework and testing as preparation for high school.

## **Extended Day Programs**

Children enrolled in the Primary, Elementary 1 and 2 and Level 3 may also enroll annually or daily for the extended day program. Extended day operates from 7:30a.m. to 8:20a.m., and again at the close of the regular class day until 5:30p.m. Children who arrive before school begins or stay after school ends will automatically go to the extended day program. A fee is charged for this service.

On most days when there is no school, extended care is offered from 7:30a.m. to 5:30p.m. by reservation only. The school calendar lists non-school days on which extended care is available.

To ensure the safety of each student, any adult picking up an extended day student **must** park the car and sign out the child from the classroom or playground before leaving with the child. Late pick-ups (those after 5:30pm) will be billed an additional per minute charge as stated in the registration contract.

Students participating in after-school activities are required to be admitted to the extended day program until the time their activity begins. They will be returned to the extended day program until the time their activity is over unless their parent signs them out directly from the extended day program.

There is no provision for children to stay after school and play even if supervised by their parents. If parents wish to meet after school to discuss any school issues among themselves, special arrangements can be made for them to sign their children into the extended day program at no charge.

## **SCHEDULE AND OPERATIONS**

**Administrative Office Hours.** The Administrative Office is open from 8am to 5pm during the school year and 9am to 3pm during the summer.

**School Day Hours.** All classes begin at 8:30am.

Dismissal times are as follows:

Center Nest students are dismissed at either 12:15p.m. or 2:45p.m.; Primary students (preschool) are dismissed at either 12:30p.m. or 2:50p.m.; Elementary 1 (grades 1-3) students are dismissed at 3:00p.m.; Elementary 2 (grades 4-5) students are dismissed at 3:15p.m.; and Level 3 (middle school) students are dismissed at 3:15p.m.

Classrooms open at 8:20a.m. Children may not be left unattended in the classrooms prior to this time. If your child arrives early s/he will go to the extended day program until the classrooms open. A nominal fee is charged for this extended time.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE.**

Parents are encouraged to deliver their children to CMS promptly in time for the beginning of the school day (by 8:30 a.m.) and to pick up their children promptly so as not to cause the children concern. If you are in line at pick-up time and your child's class has not been dismissed, please circle the building (always heading from north to south in the alley) so that those who have been dismissed can be picked up without delay.

**Written permission is required for a student to go home with someone other than his parents, even if that person is on his pick-up list. Staff members will request photo identification of any individual on the pick-up list upon arrival to pick up the child.**

The limited access to our driveway allows ONLY for the arrival and dismissal of children to and from school. Cars may not be left unattended in the driveway. The driveway will be closed from 8:45a.m. until 2:30p.m. Please follow the ONE-WAY north to south flow of driveway traffic from 8:00a.m.- 8:45am and again from 2:30p.m.-3:30p.m. when the driveway again closes.

## **PARKING**

Parking is available in the back of the main building on 26th Street Court West. During special school events, the parking lots of the Elementary 1, Elementary 2, and Middle School buildings may be opened as needed. For large school-wide events, the parking lot on the other side of 26<sup>th</sup> Street may also be utilized.

## **GATES**

For the safety of our students, the driveway entrance and exit gates are locked during the school day and again after afternoon pick up. While the driveway is closed, access can be made to the school through the exterior pedestrian gate. Simply push the buzzer button and a school official will respond.

## **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES**

Regular attendance is necessary for maximum student achievement in school. All students are expected to attend school. If you know in advance that your child is going to be absent, we ask that a parent or guardian telephone the school office so we can notify your child's teacher. We do suggest that if your child from the Elementary 1 level or above is absent from school that you check with the teacher to see if arrangements should be made for the student to make up any work missed.

## **SCHOOL CLOSURE**

In cases of severe weather, every effort will be made to notify parents of the school's planned response. This will include the school notifying local news stations, sending emails, posting information on social media pages, and/or leaving a message on the school's voice mail system. To ensure an orderly dismissal and to keep our telephone lines open, parents should obtain all information possible from social media, radio or television before calling the school.

## **BRIDGING SCHOOL AND HOME**

### **Parent Expectations**

Parents are a vital part of our school as a whole. We want you to feel comfortable whenever you come to our school whether it is for a visit, an observation, or to be of help in some way. With that in mind, we have a 15-hour per family time commitment that we ask you make to our school community. We hope you are willing to do something special for our school community by giving these 15 hours. It could be driving on a field trip, preparing materials for a special classroom project, or attending a social for new parents; the list is only limited by your choices. Additionally, a volunteer opportunity form listing ways you can be of help is available on our website. You can

also contact your child's teacher for opportunities to spend time with or help out his or her class.

### **Parents Association (CEPA)**

At the time you enroll your child at CMS, you may choose to become a member of the Parents Association, known as CEPA, which is a not-for-profit 501c3 organization. The purpose of this

Association is to support the education of CMS students. CEPA organizes fundraising events at school, provides financial aid to help maintain economic diversity in the school, and supports parent education and awareness of the Montessori Method. CEPA is a way for parents to become actively involved in the school. Meetings are scheduled throughout the school year and all families are encouraged to attend.

### **TRIP Program**

Through our CEPA organization, we are able to offer participation in a unique program that allows you to earn tuition dollars while you do your everyday shopping. The program is called the Tuition Incentive Reduction Program, or "TRIP" and you earn tuition dollars by purchasing vendor gift cards as well as electronic gift cards from such national establishments as Amazon, Panera Bread,

Starbucks, and Walmart. Once you sign up through a CEPA representative, all of it can be accomplished on your mobile devices or home computer. See the office for specific details about this program.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Empathy and being considerate of others are adult qualities that take many years to develop. It begins in childhood and in a Montessori environment it is nurtured as children learn to respect the people and materials in that environment. Our Discipline Policy emphasizes positive democratic approaches to helping children behave constructively:

1. We encourage cooperative behavior.
2. We set clear limits to ensure a peaceful environment.
3. We model appropriate behavior for the children.
4. We modify the classroom environment to encourage cooperative behavior.
5. We listen to the children.
6. We provide consistent redirection of inappropriate behavior.
7. We respect the individual needs, desires and feelings of each child.
8. We explain things to children on their level.
9. We remain consistent in our efforts to maintain a safe, peaceful environment.

We follow the Positive Discipline approach in handling challenging behaviors. However, there are times when the child needs to be removed from the environment. Extreme physical behavior directed toward another child or a staff member will result in a phone call and immediate pickup of the child. If a child is sent home, in order for the child to return, parents and child will need to first meet with Administration.

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

The Stanford Achievement Test, a nationally normed and standardized assessment, is given yearly to 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders. It provides a snapshot overview of a child's grade level performance.

## **DRESS CODE.**

We have a voluntary school uniform policy for students. Clothing with the school logo may be purchased through the Lands End website, [www.landsend.com/shop/school-uniforms](http://www.landsend.com/shop/school-uniforms). Our Preferred School number is 900183344. Additionally uniform clothing may be purchased from other vendors (for example Target or the Gap) and taken to Manatee Apparel Graphics to have the logo added for a minimal charge. If a student does not wish to participate in the uniform dress code, students should wear comfortable, casual clothes. Parents will be notified if a student comes to school in clothing that the school considers inappropriate or provocative. Shorts and skirts must be longer than fingertip length. Parents will be responsible for bringing a change of clothes for their child to keep at school. Closed sports shoes are preferable for all students. At no time are wheelie shoes permitted at school. Fridays are school T-shirt days and all students are encouraged to wear their school T-shirts.

## **LUNCHES**

A student-run catered lunch program is offered by the Middle School. Parents have the option to purchase any or all of the meals. Menus are sent home monthly. Menus are also available on the CMS website, in the school office, and by request from the classroom teacher.

Students are encouraged to pack healthy lunches and snacks at home (Center Nest and Primary students are provided snacks at school through a weekly parent rotation system) or to use our school lunch program on the days it is offered. Food brought to school should be minimally processed, nutritionally balanced, and contain little or no sugars. Candy, foods with chocolate, sodas, gum, and sugary desserts should be provided at the parents' discretion at home and not in school.

## **BIRTHDAYS AND CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS**

For those children whose families celebrate birthdays, CMS has a special manner of recognizing each child's birthday called the "Celebration of Life." The classroom teacher will provide parents with the details of how this ceremony is celebrated in her classroom.

Some classrooms permit you to provide a simple birthday snack for your child's classmates if you wish. Please check with your child's teacher first. In those classes where birthday snacks are permitted, we request that you send nutritional snacks, with limited sugar, food additives, preservatives, or artificial colors. We have provided ideas for healthy snacks to bring on the Parent Pages section of our website.

Additionally, as part of the global Montessori cultural curriculum, classrooms at different times in the year have lessons on and may participate in cultural celebrations from around the world.

## **MEDICAL ISSUES**

### **Communicable Diseases**

Students with communicable diseases (including serious colds, sore throats, persistent cough, rash, conjunctivitis, etc.) or who have vomited, had diarrhea, or a fever over 100 degrees in the 24 hours preceding the school day **must be kept at home**. A student who is prescribed an antibiotic must be on the medication for 24 hours before returning to school. CMS should be informed of any illnesses or contagious diseases immediately.

### **Illness and Injury at School**

Students who become ill during the school day must be picked up within 30 minutes of notification by the office as CMS does not have staff or facilities to care for a sick child.

If a child is injured at school and needs more than minor first aid, we will contact a parent or guardian and then proceed as instructed in the registration paperwork.

### **Lice**

As with any other school, we do experience an occasional head lice infestation. If this should occur we will ask for the family's cooperation in following all steps of eradication.

### **Medications**

Parents must complete an authorization form (available on school website) before any medication can be administered at school. Medication must be delivered to the office by

a parent or guardian in the container in which it was dispensed. A separate supply of medication must be kept at school. Medication may not be transported between home and school on a daily or weekly basis.

Prescription medicines must be labeled with the student's name, name of medication, physician's name, date, dosage amount, and frequency. Parents must supply a cup, spoon, or dropper if required to administer medication. Medications remaining at school after being discontinued or after the end of the school year will be destroyed.

Students may self-medicate if they have a history of severe allergic reactions and/or asthma attacks. They must have a written prescription from their physician stating that they may self-medicate.

## **Allergies**

All allergies and other medical conditions must be noted on the student's Emergency Card. An annually-updated "Food Allergy Action Plan" form is also mandatory for all students with food or life-threatening anaphylactic allergies. In cases of severe allergies, we may require that the allergen be eliminated from the classroom environment by asking that others not include this food in their lunch box. Additionally, CMS is a nut free environment.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Calendar**

A school calendar is available on the CMS website. School functions, as well as days that school will not be in session, are noted on the calendar. Any changes that occur throughout the year will be published in the weekly Friday folder email as well as in the newsletter, updated on the school's website, and communicated through other emails or notes home as needed.

### **Folders (Center Nest, Primary, E1, and E2) and Parent Communication Emails (E2 and L3)**

Either weekly or bi-weekly, classroom teachers send home with each child a folder of completed work along with any notes from the teachers or office. This folder is an important method of communication between school and home; parents are encouraged to ask their child for it to review.

The empty folder should be returned to school the following Monday. **Checks or notes to the teacher or office should not be put in these folders but should be brought to the school office.**

Level 3 communications are sent via e-mail. Please review the Level 3 handbook for more information.

### **Newsletter**

A school-wide newsletter is emailed and distributed to families as well as grandparents, if requested. The newsletter highlights upcoming school events as well as classroom and student activities.

### **Website**

The school maintains a parent-friendly website and strives to inform parents of class and school- wide information.

### **Email**

School information as well as classroom newsletters are regularly sent by email from the school. Please update your current email address with the school and keep us informed if it changes during the year. Weekly emails include a "Calendar Review" email which highlights upcoming school/classroom events and a "Friday Folder" email which includes the weekly classroom newsletters as well as school-wide information for all families. You may communicate with the office by email at [cms@centermontessori.org](mailto:cms@centermontessori.org).

### **Social Media**

CMS offers information to parents about our school and the Montessori philosophy through social media. CMS has a Facebook account which you may access by entering "Center Montessori School" on the Facebook website ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)); become a CMS fan and view classroom photos and information. The school has a YouTube channel "centermontessori" which is used to share special videos of our classrooms and the Montessori philosophy. CMS also communicates on Instagram, which you may follow by joining Instagram and entering "CenterMontessoriSchool". Our Founder and Director, Janice Mattina, also offers a parenting blog through Wordpress. You can find her writings at [www.parentinginstructions.wordpress.com](http://www.parentinginstructions.wordpress.com).

### **Telephones**

Phones are answered between 8:00a.m. and 5:30p.m. on days when children are at school. During all other times, or when all phone lines are busy, please leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible.

Parents needing to contact their children may leave messages in the school office.

**Students are not permitted to use cell phones at school.** Please review the E2 and L3 handbooks for additional restrictions on personal media and electronics.

## **Note Boards**

School-wide and classroom information will be posted on the white board near the awning in the driveway.

## **Office Mail Box**

A silver box located on the wall behind the front office desk is to be used for dropping off information you want the school to receive. This includes tuition checks, notes to the office staff or the teachers, lunch orders, and scrip orders. Field trip forms should be brought directly to your child's classroom teacher.

## **Conferences**

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year. If you wish to schedule additional conferences, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or the office. If a teacher feels that she needs information from you or wishes to give you information, she will call you for an additional conference. All conferences are highly confidential conversations between the school and you. Written evaluations for Elementary 1 and 2, and Level 3 are sent home periodically.

## **Family Issues**

The school should be notified in the event a significant change occurs in the home that may affect the behavior or performance of the student. All information will be regarded as confidential. Common causes of distress include either or both parents being away from home for any reason for an extended period of time; a new person living in the home; illness of a parent or sibling; any hospitalization, accident, or death in the family; new caretaker; moving; or death of a pet. Parents will be kept informed of any significant change in the school environment that may affect the child as well.

In the case of divorced or separated parents, references in this guide to "parent" are to the parent who enrolled the child with CMS, known as the enrolling parent. The enrolling parent has all decision-making authority, sole responsibility for providing CMS pertinent information concerning the child, and sole authority to name individual(s) on the child's pick-up authorization list, as well as the emergency contacts list. Copies of records, reports, or any other information concerning the child will be provided solely to the enrolling parent. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent to determine whether the child's records, reports, or other information is required to be or will be shared with the non-enrolling parent.

## **CLASSROOM VISITS AND OBSERVATIONS**

Parents are encouraged to visit in the classroom. These visits are welcome after the first-six weeks of school have been completed and prior to the start of the last-six

weeks of school. Classroom observations are by appointment and are limited to 20 minutes. Appointments can be made through the main school office. On the day of the visit, before entering your child's classroom, you must first check in at the office to receive a visitor's badge.

## **STUDENT RECORDS**

Student records may consist of, but are not limited to, attendance records, health and emergency information, assessments, developmental and academic progress reports, accident reports, and parental authorization for various school activities. The Center stresses the importance of protecting the rights and privacy of children, their families, and our teachers. The practice of maintaining the confidentiality of verbal information and written records is a basic policy of our school.

### **Health Records**

All students must follow state law regarding physical exams and immunizations. Any student without up-to-date health records will not be permitted to attend classes until state guidelines are met.

### **Emergency Cards**

Every student must have an emergency card on file with the school office. CMS must be notified immediately when the information changes. No student will be permitted to attend a school event off campus unless this card is on file and current.

### **Transfers**

When transferring to another school, records will be sent to the school upon request in writing by either the new school or the parent of the child.

## **TUITION AND FEES**

Parents select a student's tuition payment schedule upon enrollment. CMS does not send bills unless tuition payments are late. Detailed statements are available from the office upon request. These payment plans are explained in your child's registration packet.

Extended day charges are billed monthly and payment is due on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. Payments made after the 20<sup>th</sup> will be charged a \$25 late fee.

A \$25 fee will be charged on checks returned from the bank for any reason. If an individual's check is returned, that individual may be required to make future payments in the form of cash or money order.

Accounts that are more than 30 days in arrears will cause the student's continued enrollment to be terminated and the parents will be responsible for the legal costs incurred by the school to collect the delinquent tuition. Additionally, students whose accounts are more than 30 days in arrears are not permitted to participate in overnight trips and no grades, transcripts or recommendations will be issued on behalf of these students.

## **Withdrawals**

In the case that a family must withdraw a student, written notice must be given to the Center at least four weeks prior to the actual date of withdrawal. If such notice is not given four weeks in advance of withdrawal, any refund owed will be calculated four weeks from the date of written notice. A refund will be calculated according to the Tuition Refund and Credit Plan as outlined in the 2020-2021 Registration Form.

## **Material Fees**

All students will be charged a materials fee for classroom supplies, consumable books and materials. The amount of the fee varies by classroom level. The office will notify parents of each class fee, which is due with the first tuition installment for that year. A replacement fee will be charged for books that are lost. Materials Fees are non-refundable.

## **Financial Assistance**

Our Parents Association (CEPA) offers a limited amount of need-based financial aid for families who have difficulty meeting the cost of tuition. All requests for financial assistance must be made at the time of registration, but no later than the spring deadline announced every year for the upcoming school year. Families seeking assistance will be asked to complete a detailed financial statement through the National Association of Independent Schools' School and Student Service for Financial Aid and provide a copy of their tax return.

## **TRIPS**

Students at the Elementary level and above take several off-campus field trips throughout the year. A signed permission slip for each individual trip is required.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

CMS owns a school bus that may be used to transport students on field trips if prior written approval is received from the student's parent or guardian. While riding on the bus, students are expected to use their seat belts, to remain seated in the bus with their hands and faces inside the bus at all times, and to be orderly and generally quiet.

## **SPECIAL SCHOOL EVENTS**

Throughout the year, CMS sponsors various celebrations in order to create a school-wide sense of community. All families are strongly urged to participate in these celebrations.

### **FALL TERM**

#### **Ice Cream Social**

Every August, the children and their families are welcomed back to school with an old-fashioned ice cream social. A non-dairy iced dessert is also available.

#### **Parent Back to School Party**

At the start of every school year, the Parents Association (CEPA) hosts an adult-only evening for parents to socialize with one another and school staff and to celebrate the start of a new school year. More details will be in emails and on the website.

#### **Wrapping Paper Fundraiser**

Gift wrap items and gourmet treats are sold each fall to benefit the school community. Parents are encouraged to support the school's programs by participating in this fundraiser.

#### **Silent Journey**

One of the most popular programs offered to parents, the Silent Journey is a Friday night and Saturday morning parent education opportunity that provides a unique look into the Montessori Method, from toddlers through middle school. Parents are required to attend this program within the first three years of their child's enrollment in school. Due to the popularity of this event, a reservation must be made ahead of time to secure a space.

#### **Plate and Mugs**

In October, the children have the opportunity to make special drawings that will be transformed into plates, mugs, and bowls.

#### **Back-to-School Nights**

Evening meetings are held for parents to acquaint themselves with their child's school schedule and classroom procedures.

## **Art Festival**

The annual Art Festival gives children opportunities to make special arts and crafts projects, play games, enjoy food and drinks, and generally have a wonderful day with their friends and families at school.

## **Grandparents and Special Friends Day**

Each year immediately prior to Thanksgiving Break, grandparents and special friends of CMS students are invited to join us for a celebration that may include a visit to the student's classroom or lunch with the student.

## **Holiday Gift Shop**

During December, the Elementary 1, 3rd-year students operate a holiday gift shop where all the students may purchase holiday gifts for their families and friends.

## **WINTER TERM**

### **Follow the Child**

Parents are invited to experience the continuum of the Montessori curriculum as practiced at CMS. Class curricula and procedures for the next age level are presented by the classroom teachers.

### **Montessori Education Week and School-wide Celebration**

During the school year, CMS students study the cultural Montessori curriculum. Each spring we observe Montessori Education Week, with celebrations held throughout the week, culminating in a school-wide gathering for family and friends. At this event, older students share their study of the cultural curriculum and special projects they have made with their fellow students and parents and Primary and Elementary 1 students put on a performance.

### **Book Fair**

The Center's annual Book Fair is held during Montessori Education Week. Books for the entire family and your child's classroom are available for purchase. Family night is held on Friday during our Montessori school-wide celebration.

## **SPRING TERM**

### **Community Service and Internships**

Middle School students volunteer throughout the year at various businesses and service agencies in the community. Students serving their community benefit by being recognized as responsible achievers, using skills that are prerequisites of adult success, trying out different roles for identity formation, and developing a higher regard for themselves. They become more aware of their communities and the people in them, and learn tolerance for others as well as empathy for environmental and social issues. Past work sites have included FELT (Feeding Empty Little Tummys, a non-profit organization providing food to homeless and hungry children on weekends), Turning Points (Community Coalition on Homelessness), a veterinary hospital, the airport control tower, a local cable television station, a county commissioner's office, a Head Start class, and a horse farm.

### **Class Trips**

Each spring the Elementary 2 class goes on an overnight trip to study marine life. Past trips have been to Sea Camp at the Newfound Harbor Marine Institute in the Florida Keys and on the Water's Journey Program with Nature's Academy, which included on-site study at Fort DeSoto Park, Crystal River and Rainbow River. The weeks before the trip include many lessons on marine biology as a preparation for the educational adventure.

Also in the spring, the Middle School class goes on a class trip. The trips are either service based, outdoor adventure themed or international. Several student-run fundraisers are held throughout the year to earn money for the trip. Past trips have included a service trip to the Dominican Republic through the international organization Outreach 360, a service trip to Heifer Ranch in Arkansas (sponsored by Heifer International), Wilderness Adventures in Virginia, Canyonlands in Moab, Utah and international trips to Belize, Costa Rica and Canada.

### **Land Lab Eco-Celebration**

The school operates a 10-acre land laboratory on State Road 64 East. Middle School students spend time at the land lab working with the soil, planting native trees and constructing environmentally friendly structures. A school-wide family day of food and fun with a focus on environmental consciousness is held each year at the Land Lab.

### **Graduation and Moving-Up Ceremony**

Eighth-grade graduates are recognized at a special evening graduation ceremony. All school families are invited to attend. In addition, all students moving up to the next level will be recognized in a ceremony during the school day.

**The staff at CMS welcomes your family and we look forward to spending our time with your child as we work towards enabling every child to reach his/her full potential.**