

The Starlight School

Parent Handbook 2009 – 2010

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Starlight School. This is a handbook for reference, which will answer some of the questions you may have. It will be revised as needed. Starlight School is a center-based preschool that provides care and instruction using Montessori methods. The school serves children aged 18 months to first grade entry. The preschool program serves children 2 years and nine months to 6. The toddler program is for children 18 - 36 months. The school is open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Its license number is 73403298. Parisa LoBianco, the owner, is a member of the American Montessori Society.

Starlight School is committed to providing a nurturing environment and quality care. We offer materials and activities, which promote academic, emotional, and social growth according to the capacity of each individual child. The qualities of grace, courtesy, and respect are modeled and encouraged. Character development is a primary goal at Starlight School. We believe that the child who displays virtues such as self-confidence, empathy, independence, and compassion is able to take on academic and social challenges with relative ease. Starlight School is also committed to fostering the understanding of world cultures.

PHILOSOPHY

Montessori schools begin with a deep respect for children as unique individuals. They work from a deep concern for their social and emotional development. They consciously teach children to be kind and peaceful. The staff at Starlight School is Montessori trained and committed to the well being of all the children. Montessori schools are warm and supportive communities of students, teachers, and parents. Montessori classes bring children together in multi-age groups. Normally, the classes span three age levels, allowing the children to stay with their teachers for three years. This allows teachers to develop close and long-term relationship with their pupils so that they will come to know each child's learning style very well and encourage a strong sense of community among the children. Students are involved in managing their own community and develop uncanny leadership skills and independence. Montessori philosophy assumes that children are born intelligent, they simply learn in different ways and progress at their own pace. The Montessori approach to education is consciously designed to recognize and address different learning styles. Dr. Montessori's research led her to conclude that intelligence is not rare among human beings. It manifests itself in the natural spontaneous curiosity of the young child from birth. Montessori observed that when children grow up in an environment that is intellectually and artistically alive, warm, and encouraging, they would spontaneously ask questions, investigate, create, and explore new ideas.

SCHEDULE

Preschool Program

Children arrive at 9 am (or 12:30 for the afternoon class). Circle time begins as we sing a greeting song, which includes each child's name. A time for sharing is also included here. Teachers use this first circle time to present new materials, reinforce appropriate behavior, and discuss topics at that time. At approximately 9:40 am (or 1:30 pm) the work period begins. Children are free to explore all areas of the environment and make their own choices for activities (works). The areas available are Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, Culture, Music, Science and Art. The work period ends at 11:10 (or 2:55) at which time the children play outside in the enclosed playground from 11:15 am to 11:30 am (or 3:00 pm to 3:15 pm) with supervision. Closing circle begins at 11:30 am (or 3:10 pm). This is a time for stories, songs, or dramatic play until children are dismissed at 11:45 am (or 3:30 pm)

Toddler Program

Daily Schedule:

9:00 - 9:15	12:30 - 12:45	Greeting Circle
9:15 - 10:30	12:45 - 1:45	Work Period
10:30 - 10:45	1:45 - 2:00	Snack
10:45 - 11:15	2:00 - 2:15	Outside Play
11:15 - 11:30	2:15 - 2:30	Closing Circle

SNACKS

Preschool Snacks

We are a nut free and low sugar school. Families are assigned days to provide fresh fruit and vegetables, enough for 25 children.

Toddler Snacks

A calendar is provided for parents to sign up for snack days.

Please bring enough fruits/vegetables for 11 children.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENTS

There will be an interview process between Starlight School and parents before a child can be admitted.

Enrollment in the preschool program is open to children aged 2.9 to 6 who are fully toilet-trained and physically and emotionally able to function in the school environment. Enrollment in the toddler program is open to children aged 18 to 36 months. Parents are required to sign their child in and out of school using their full name. The Montessori preschool program can be a 2 or 3-year commitment. Consideration will be given to age and gender in balancing the class. Admissions are based on availability of space and determination of staff that a child will benefit from the environment. Starlight School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, or national and ethnic origin in its admissions or other program policies. Prior to applying for admission to Starlight School, the parents are asked to observe the classroom while it is in session. In order to reduce disruption to the class during observations and make a visit more productive, we ask that you come by yourself.

RE-ENROLLMENTS

In order to reserve a place for the following year, current parents are asked to submit a completed application and a \$100 non-refundable registration fee by February 1. Returning children will be given priority for enrollment, followed by siblings of currently enrolled children. On February 1, enrollment will be open to the public to fill any remaining openings.

ORIENTATION

The first few days of school operate as a phase-in period for the children to help them in the transition to school. For many, it will be a very new feeling having had no previous preschool experience.

The first day, parents accompany their child and visit for only 15 to 20 minutes, meeting the teachers, seeing the classroom, and trying out the materials. The following days the child comes by himself. Sometimes separations are difficult, but it is best if the child comes alone. Parents are always welcome at Starlight School, but it is best if parents wait outside of the child's view. All children enter the school on a probationary basis. The health and safety of all children and staff members requires the withdrawal of any child whose behavior is determined to endanger himself, other children, or staff members. A child may also be dismissed if it is found that the program is not meeting the child's needs.

WITHDRAWAL

If either the parents or Starlight School determines that the placement of the child in this program is not in the best interest of the child or the school, a conference will be scheduled to discuss appropriate action. If it is decided that the child should be removed from the school, the registration fee and

tuition will be forfeited. If for any reason, you decide to withdraw your child from Starlight School a thirty days notice is required. Parents will be responsible for tuition fees for the next thirty days following their intent to withdraw their child.

TUITION/FEES/PAYMENT

Starlight School tuition is an annual fee in 10 equal payments plus a \$100 registration fee. The first and last month's tuition payments are due on the September first. The other eight payments are due on the first day of each month, October through May. **Equal tuition is charged for all 10 months even though some months have more scheduled holidays. Full tuition is due for each month even if children are away for vacation, sickness, or holidays not observed by Starlight School.** The \$100 registration fee is due upon enrollment. Parents will be given at least a 30-day advance notice of tuition increase. The school is committed to creating a close collaboration between it and the parents. The following are required forms that need to be completed upon enrolling your child:

- Tuition contract and \$100 registration fee
- Notice of Parents' Rights
- Personal Rights
- Health History
- Identification and Emergency Information
- Consent for Medical Treatment
- Immunization Record
- Physician's Report

HOLIDAYS

Starlight School follows the same holiday schedule as the local school district. The school observes the following holidays: Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Vacation, Winter Vacation, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Spring Vacation, and Memorial Day.

RELEASES

For your child's security, parents are responsible for notifying the school if someone other than the parents or individual listed on the emergency form is going to take the child from school. Children will not be released to anyone unless a phone call or note is given to the school. This person should be recognizable to the child. Starlight School will check an unknown person's photo I.D. to verify the person's identity.

BIRTHDAYS

Preschool and Toddlers

At Starlight School, a candle is lit to represent the sun, and the child carries the globe around the sun to represent the passage of each year. Children are invited to bring in pictures, one from each year of life, beginning at birth. The teacher tells the story of the child's life during each year, and the children sing.

CLOTHING/SHOES/SUPPLIES

Preschool

Children are encouraged to wear comfortable, practical clothes, which allow for free movement and which are suitable for art projects. Fasteners, zippers, and buttons should be easily manageable for the child. Belts are difficult for children who wait until the last minute to get to the bathroom. Overalls can be difficult unless they practice. Please label all jackets and/or sweatshirts. Children must come to school in non-skid, closed-toe shoes, which are safe and comfortable for play. No cowboy boots, please.

Toddlers

Please send a full change of clothing with your child enclosed in a clear Ziploc bag and labeled with the child's name, a supply of diapers (5 is enough) in a clear Ziploc bag and labeled with the child's name, and an unopened container of wipes to be used by the classroom as a whole. Desitin and sunscreen are provided by Starlight School.

Please bring a picture of your child to be used on the cubby or folder, and a family picture to be placed on our Family Tree.

DISCIPLINE

The staff at Starlight School relies greatly on the natural and logical consequences relating to behavior, consistency in reinforcing the playground and classroom rules, and constructive redirection to maintain discipline within the school. We believe that children find security and direction when there is consistent adult guidance and discipline. Children explore, observe, feel, interact, and learn through the process of being involved with people and things in their world. All behaviors are learned. Teachers, in their role of caring for children, model and teach appropriate behavior. Children need to know what we expect from them before they can follow the natural order of the classroom. No corporal punishment will be used at Starlight School.

We, therefore, expect teachers to use constructive and preventative methods of discipline and to maintain an atmosphere of love, acceptance, and order.

This atmosphere is one in which children respect themselves, their peers, and their teachers. The teachers plan ahead for possible areas of conflict. A teacher will redirect a child by distracting the child's attention away from the disruptive behavior and directing the child to some other activity, which is acceptable. The teacher will make sure that the child understands what will happen if he or she persists in the unacceptable behavior. This will be done using words that the child can understand with the teacher sitting or kneeling at the child's level. The outcome must be appropriate to the behavior being corrected. Our goal is to work in partnership with parents to create an environment in which the child's self-esteem and skills for expression and conflict resolution are enhanced. No time outs will be given, but the child might be asked to hold the teacher's hand and stroll through the classroom in order to calm the child. When the child has calmed and is ready to go back to work, the teacher will help the child find something constructive to do.

DISMISSALS

All children enter on a probationary basis. The health and safety of all children and staff members requires the withdrawal of any child whose behavior is determined to endanger himself, other children, or staff members. A child may also be dismissed if it is found that the child's needs are not being met with the program provided. Starlight School reserves the right to dismiss any child whose tuition payments are delinquent for more than thirty days.

DISASTERS

We will hold regular fire drills so that your child will know exactly what to do and how to respond in an emergency situation.

FIELD TRIPS

Preschool Field Trips

From time to time, we may take small excursions or field trips. Parent permission in writing is required, and we may ask you to help drive. Also, across the courtyard from us in the Gathering Hall of the Church, Valley Oak Respite program meets three times a week. They often ask our school to bring the children over to sing a few songs for them a couple of times a year. This is a wonderful service the children can provide to a small section of our community.

Toddler Field Trips

You will be notified in advance if the toddler classroom is involved in a school field trip (examples may be the Danville Public Library and a trip to a local

pumpkin patch). Toddler aged children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian on all excursions and/or field trips.

HEALTH

All children entering the programs at Starlight School must have valid proof of the required immunizations before they will be allowed to attend.

ALLERGIES

It is important to list all allergies on the emergency or medical consent forms. Advise the school immediately of any new information to be added to the forms. Children experiencing severe allergy reactions, which inhibit their ability to comfortably cope within the school setting, are asked to remain at home.

ILLNESSES

Children with fever, sore throat, active colds, vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rashes should be kept at home. If your child has a communicable or highly contagious disease (chicken pox, pinkeye, head lice, or impetigo), please notify the school immediately. If your child becomes ill at school, we will request that you, or your designated emergency contact, take your child from school. A child must stay home for 24 hours after a fever breaks. Please do not send medication with your child. No medication will be administered at Starlight School. In situations of emergency or injury, staff will administer first aid as necessary or will call 911 as necessary.

One of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness is by frequent hand washing and the proper use and disposal of used tissues. Children are expected to wash their hands when soiled, before eating, after blowing their noses, and after using the toilet. Pre school aged children are expected to know how to use the toilet and how to wipe themselves. Reinforcement of these life skills at home and school will help the child gain independence.

Positive routines are important at bedtime to insure a restful night with adequate hours of sleep for young children. Children who stay up late and rise early for an active day will be fatigued at school and will not get the most out of their environment.

INSPECTION OF FACILITY

Parents are allowed to visit the facility without advanced notice at any time

during the normal hours of operation. However, when the parent's behavior poses a threat to the health and safety of the children, the entrance is denied. Respectful behavior is expected by everyone.

The Department of Licensing shall have the authority to interview clients, including children or staff, and to inspect and audit client or facility records without prior consent. The Department of Licensing shall have the authority to observe the physical condition of the client, including conditions which indicate abuse, neglect, or inappropriate placement, and to have a licensed medical professional /physician examine the client.

The state of California requires that several health forms and medical releases be on file with the school for each child. Therefore, all forms that are issued upon acceptance of your child at the school must be returned to the school by the first day of your child's attendance.

CONFERENCES

There will be a parent meeting in the fall to acquaint parents with other parents, the teachers, and the school. Informal conferences will be held with parents when necessary. A formal parent conference is usually scheduled in January. We will do our best to bring up questions or concerns as soon as we have them, and to make sure you are informed at all times of your child's progress.

BACKGROUND

Parisa LoBianco received her B.A. from Cal-State Hayward in 1984, a Teaching Credential from San Francisco State in 1985, and a Montessori certificate for teaching children ages 3 to 6. She is a member of the American Montessori Society as well as the International Montessori Foundation.

From 1996 to 1998 Parisa was employed as a Montessori preschool teacher at Garden School in Danville. She worked as a child-care provider for children ages 6 months to 10 years in her home. Previous to that, she was an elementary school teacher for grades 1 through 4 in the Dublin, Manteca, and Pacifica school districts. She was employed as a preschool teacher at Serendipity Learning Center in 1981. She worked as a behavior specialist at Spectrum Center in 1984. She has been a teacher of 6 and 7 year olds at a Baha'i Sunday school for 6 years, has served on its Board of Directors for 4 years and is currently co-director of the school. She has three daughters. Parisa is a member of the Baha'i Faith, which recognizes the oneness of God, of religions, and humanity. She has traveled and lived in many countries including Iran, many parts of Africa, South America, and Europe.

No medication will be administered at Starlight School. In situations of emergency or injury, staff will administer first aid as necessary or call 911 as necessary.

There will be an interview process between the School and parents before child will be admitted.

Starlight School Tuition Rates and Hours

September 2009 - June 2010

Preschool Program - Ages 2.9 to 6

	Part-time		Full-time
Days per week	9-12	12:30-3:30	9am - 3:30
3	\$450	\$420	\$580
4	\$495	\$465	\$695
5	\$615	\$585	\$780

Toddler Program - Ages 18 months - 3

	Part-time
Days per week	9-11:30
MWF	\$490
TTH	\$440
TWTh	

Emergency Drop-in rate is \$20 for part-time and \$40 for full-time. Hourly rate is \$7 per hour. (Not available for the toddler program)

A 10% discount will be taken off the second child's tuition for families who enroll 2 children.

Registration fee: \$100 non-refundable

Lunch Bunch Program: Child brings a lunch and stays until 12:30 for an extra \$5. (Not available for the toddler program)

Late tuition: \$5 per day after the 5th of the month

Late pick-up fee: \$10, 10 minutes after pick-up time