**GUIDELINES FOR PARENT CHAPERONES**

*When a child goes out, it is the world itself that offers itself to him. Let us take the child out to show him real things instead of making objects which represent ideas and closing them in cupboards.*

Maria Montessori

Thank you for considering acting as a chaperone for the Elementary Community children. ‘Going out’ is an essential element in the Montessori elementary program and is very different from a field trip for the whole group. The children ‘Go Out’ in small groups as an extension of their research and to gain experiences in the world outside the classroom. The children develop independence, resourcefulness, and self-confidence through functioning capably in the larger world without adult assistance.

Ideally the children should ‘go out’ on their own by walking, cycling, scooting or taking public transportation to their destination, but in our time and place safety dictates the adaptation of adult accompaniment when going out from The Montessori Place.

**The Child’s Preparation**

*The foot is noble. To walk is noble. Thanks to the feet, the child who already walks can expect of the outdoors certain answers to his secret questions. But it is necessary to prepare oneself to go out. The child in flight opens the door and goes. In teaching him the necessity of preparation, we oblige him to reflect. He understands that ‘to go out’ consists of an activity that requires first the acquisition of information and materials.*

Maria Montessori

The children should be prepared to:

* carry all that they need - notebooks, pencils, sketchpads, money, guidebooks, etc., - in a backpack by themselves
* handle all money transactions
* conduct all communications for the group
* know what behaviour is expected of them before leaving The Montessori Place
* know the route through existing knowledge or by use of a map
* know which bus or train to catch, and from where
* if in the chaperone’s car, direct the driver to the destination through a map or written instructions
* stop, look, and listen before crossing roads and driveways
* stay within sight of the adult at all times

**The Role of the Chaperone**

The role of the adult is an active one because remaining focused and observant while refraining from participating or interfering is so demanding. The adult intervenes on three occasions only:

* to ensure the children’s safety by preventing inappropriate adult interaction
* to interrupt unsafe or inappropriate behaviour and firmly but compassionately return the children to school immediately
* to observe, record, and transmit the experience to the guide

The children may not reach the destination, they may not have enough money to get in, they may get lost or the ‘Going Out’ may go just as they hoped it would. Helping them to realise they can handle all of these scenarios without adult assistance is the greatest gift the chaperone can give.

The role of the chaperone at this point is one of active observation and alert self-restraint. The chaperone must remain focused on the children, their safety, and appropriate behaviour. It is important to stay ten paces behind the children to help them rely upon their own resources on the trip.

The children should be prepared to pay entrance fees and find their own way using maps, directions, and guidebooks. They should be the ones that seek out the contact person, if there is one, and introduce themselves. They point out the chaperone who is standing ten paces away and explain that s/he will be there only for safety and transportation. The chaperone nods and looks away in order to reinforce the children’s independence.

Any time the children have questions during the ‘Going Out’, including directions, they find adults other than the chaperone to answer them. If the children forget and ask the chaperone a question, s/he turns the other way as a reminder.

The chaperone avoids making eye contact with the adults at the ‘Going Out’ site. If at any time the contact person or other adult tries to direct his comments toward the chaperone, the children reply that they speak for themselves, the chaperone doesn’t speak. We want to give the children the support they need to conduct the outings entirely through their own efforts.

**Safe and Appropriate Behaviour**

When crossing a road, the children stand a little back from the curb and wait until it is safe to cross, using designated crossing points wherever possible. All children should remain close together. The adult stays behind the children, watching that all their behaviour is safe and appropriate, that the environment is safe, and that any adult interaction with them is safe and appropriate.

There are many times when conversations between the children will be lively, but on public transport or in cars voices should be kept low out of consideration for the driver or other passengers.

Other basic rules are that

* all objects (lunch boxes, books, etc.) and hands will be kept away from windows.
* on public transport the each child will choose a seat for the duration of the journey.
* no electronic games, books are the best option for longer journeys.

In the case of unsafe or inappropriate behaviour, the chaperone makes no comment on it, gives no guidance, but only returns immediately to school with the children saying, “I see that we must return to school right now.” Back at The Montessori Place the guide helps the chaperone and children discuss how to have a successful trip next time.

**Car Travel**

When travelling in a car, please ensure any electronic device (eg CD or radio) is turned off throughout the trip as these will distract the children’s attention from the route and the aim of their excursion.

Mobile phones should be turned off from departure until the car is parked at the destination unless an appropriate hands-free device in available.

After parking the car but before unloading, unbuckling, or opening any doors, the adult listens while the children establish which doors will be used for unloading (curb side only) and where the children will stand to wait while the adult locks up. The children should be prepared to put coins in the meter.

The driver is responsible for complying with the laws in respect of the use of seat belts and child restraints. In particular the following rules apply:

1. The driver must wear a seatbelt at all times whilst driving.
2. A child from their 3rd birthday up to 135cm in height (approx 4’ 5”) or their 12th birthday whichever they reach first, should use a correct child restraint i.e. a booster seat or cushion appropriate for the weight of the child with a seatbelt. The only exception is where two occupied child restraints prevent the fitting of a third. In this case a normal seatbelt must be used. It is the driver’s responsibility to ensure that children are seated and restrained correctly.
3. A child over 135cm height (approx 4’ 5”) or 12 or 13 years old must wear a seat belt and it is the driver’s responsibility to ensure that they do so.

That’s it! Thank you again for offering to help, please don’t hesitate to ask if you have any know further questions.