

The Willow School Handbook  
2024-2025



*The Willow School*

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# About The Willow School

Welcome to The Willow School! Our school was established in May 2023 with a mission to bring more Montessori education to the Central Texas area. For over a year we were looking for the perfect home for our school. Finally, we fell in love with a church building from the 1950s! Thus, the purchase of our beautiful building occurred and complete renovation began. We are located at 1911 West Avenue H in Temple, TX.

Our founders, Taylore Oldfield-Jackson and Kyah Spence, are passionate about providing high-quality education to children in a nurturing and engaging environment. At The Willow School, we are proud members of the American Montessori Society and are working towards becoming a certified AMS school. We believe in providing a hands-on, child-centered approach to learning that fosters independence, creativity, and critical thinking skills. We welcome families from all backgrounds and are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment. Our goal is to provide a safe and nurturing space where children can thrive and reach their full potential.

## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to cultivate holistic development, critical thinking, and practical life skills through the principles of Montessori education. We strive to enable students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally and to positively impact their communities and the world at large.

## **Vision Statement**

We envision a world where every individual, like the graceful willow tree, stands tall, embraces their inner strength, and flourishes in the face of challenges. Guided by the Montessori philosophy and grounded in the principles of survival, strength, and stability, we strive to be a beacon of inspiration and transformation, nurturing resilient individuals who not only thrive academically but also grow into compassionate, empathetic global citizens. We aspire to cultivate a community where diversity is celebrated, creativity is nurtured, and every learner is provided with the tools and support necessary to unlock their full potential.

## **Purpose Statement**

We seek to create a nurturing environment that fosters resiliency, nourishes social-emotional growth, empowers children to become independent thinkers, and ignites a passion for lifelong learning.

## **Montessori Philosophy**

The Montessori philosophy was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator who lived from 1870 to 1952. Dr. Montessori believed that children are naturally curious and motivated to learn and that they should be given the freedom to explore their environment and learn at their own pace.

Dr. Montessori's approach emphasizes the development of the whole child, including their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth. She believed that children should be given the opportunity to learn through hands-on experience and that the role of the teacher is to guide and support the child's learning.

The Montessori approach is based on several key principles, including the importance of a prepared environment, mixed-age classrooms, and the use of specialized Montessori materials that are designed to support children's learning and development.

Today, the Montessori approach is used in schools and early childhood programs around the world and continues to be a popular choice for parents who are looking for a child-centered, holistic approach to education.

# Hours of Operation

## **Minimum Standards 746.501(2)**

The Willow School classrooms are open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and the office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Children may arrive upon opening but not later than 8:30 a.m. and may be picked up anytime between 2:30/3:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Potential exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis.

Please refer to the school calendar. <https://www.thewillowschooltx.com/2024-2025-calendar>

The Willow School is a year-round school. Operational months are August to July.

Late Pick-up - Parents who pick up their child after closing, based upon our school clock, will be assessed a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute. You will be billed for the late fee. To ensure adequate staffing at all times and to comply with Minimum Standards, drop-in service is not available.

# Enrollment

## Minimum Standards 746.501(13)

### Enrollment Process:

1. Inquiry and Information:
  - Parents make an initial inquiry about enrollment by contacting the school. Information about the center's programs, policies, fees, and enrollment criteria is provided.
2. Scheduled Tour:
  - Schedule a tour of the school for interested parents. During the tour, provide an overview of the facilities, introduce them to staff members, and answer any questions they may have.
3. Application Submission:
  - Interested parents complete an enrollment application form through Brightwheel. This form includes the child's essential information..
4. Review and Approval:
  - The school reviews the application, ensuring that all required information are provided. If there are any concerns or additional information needed, the center communicates promptly with the parents.
5. Orientation Meeting:
  - Conduct an orientation meeting with parents to discuss the school's policies, daily routines, and expectations. Provide them with a copy of the parent handbook containing detailed information about the center's policies and procedures via Brightwheel.
6. Payment of Fees:
  - Upon acceptance, parents submit the required \$100 application and \$500 supply fee and make arrangements for ongoing payments as outlined in the fee structure.
8. Registration
  - After the application is submitted and the application fee is paid, applicants will be sent registration forms. This will include health and immunization records. Parents are required to submit up-to-date health and immunization records for their child before the commencement of enrollment. This will be sent through Brightwheel.

# Disenrollment

## Minimum Standards 746.501(8)

### Definitions:

1. Suspension: Temporary removal of a child from the school for a specified period.
2. Expulsion: Permanent termination of a child's enrollment in the school.

### Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion:

1. Safety Concerns: Any behavior that poses a threat to the safety of the child or others will be grounds for suspension or expulsion. This includes physical aggression, violence, or any action that creates an unsafe environment.
2. Serious Violation of Policies: Repeated or severe violations of the school's policies, such as harassment, bullying, or intentional destruction of property, may result in suspension or expulsion.
3. Failure to Meet Immunization Requirements: Children who do not meet the school's immunization requirements, as mandated by local health authorities, may face suspension until the necessary vaccinations are obtained.
4. Non-Payment of Fees: Persistent failure to pay school fees may result in suspension or expulsion.

# Challenging Behavior

Purpose: To create a supportive and respectful environment that promotes positive behavior and addresses challenging behaviors in a manner consistent with Montessori principles.

Policy Statement: The Willow School is committed to fostering a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment. We believe that understanding and addressing challenging behaviors is essential to the holistic development of each child. Our approach emphasizes observation, individualized support, and positive reinforcement within a prepared environment.

Challenging behaviors can include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- Repeated physical aggression (hitting, biting, scratching, etc.)
- Repeated relational aggression (verbal bullying, discouraging language, etc.)
- Excessive tantrums
- Self-injurious behaviors (head banging, intentional scratching, etc.)
- Refusal to follow directions or classroom expectations
- Intentionally destroying classroom property

## 1. Observation and Understanding

- Detailed Observation: Educators will observe children regularly to identify triggers, patterns, and contexts of challenging behaviors. Observations will be objective and detailed.
- Documentation: All observations will be documented meticulously, including the time, place, and specific circumstances of the behavior.
- Observations will be entered into Brightwheel for record keeping and to notify the parent(s)/guardian immediately of any incidents related to behavior.

## 2. Environment Preparation

- Prepared Environment: The classroom will be organized to promote independence, order, and accessibility. Materials will be arranged logically and within reach of the children.
- Freedom Within Limits: Children will be provided with choices in their activities within clear and consistent boundaries to encourage autonomy while ensuring a structured environment.

## 3. Individualized Approach

- Understanding Individual Needs: Educators will take time to understand each child's unique needs, interests, and developmental stages through continuous observation and interaction.
- Personalized Interventions: Based on observations, educators will develop and implement tailored strategies to support each child's specific needs and address challenging behaviors effectively using Montessori Principles.
  - o If your child is displaying challenging behavior, our staff will work as a team with family members to develop, if possible, and implement an individualized



behavior plan that supports the child's inclusion and success within our program.

The behavior plan must be feasible within the guidelines of Montessori Principles.

#### 4. Positive Reinforcement and Encouragement

- **Positive Reinforcement:** In Montessori education, praise is handled thoughtfully to encourage intrinsic motivation rather than dependence on external validation. This approach helps children develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments and fosters a love of learning for its own sake. The goal is to support the child's self-esteem and confidence by acknowledging their effort and progress, rather than just the outcome.
- **Encouragement:** Educators will consistently encourage children to express their feelings and needs in appropriate ways. Positive language and affirmation will be used to build self-esteem and confidence.

#### 5. Collaboration with Families

- **Communication:** Regular communication with families will be maintained to discuss observations, interventions, and progress. Families will be encouraged to share insights and collaborate in addressing challenging behaviors. This will be done in person, through Brightwheel, and via the telephone. Open communication is encouraged when expressing any concerns regarding behavior.
- The director and/or teaching staff will have a parent conference to determine appropriate interventions and strategies to address the behavior. It is crucial that parents are actively involved in strategies and support efforts to mitigate the behavior.
- At all times during this process the goals and objectives for learning and behavior in our program will be considered during conversations.
- **Consistency:** Efforts will be made to ensure consistency between the approaches used at the center and those at home, fostering a coherent support system for the child.
- If all efforts have been attempted to mitigate the challenging behavior and none have deemed successful, withdrawal or suspension may be considered.
- **Possible termination due to no progress regarding the behavior.**
  - o In extreme cases, immediate termination from the program may be issued without notice. If your child presents a danger to themselves or others or causes severe injury, we may require immediate termination, in which your child may not return to care. No tuition will be refunded.

#### 6. Three Strikes Policy for Physical Behavior (case by case)

- **First Incident:** Upon the first occurrence of physical behavior, the child will be calmly and kindly reminded of appropriate behavior. The incident will be documented, and parents will be notified at the end of the day.
- **Second Incident:** If physical behavior occurs a second time, the child will be removed from the immediate situation, and a discussion will be held to reflect on the behavior utilizing the calming corner. The incident will be documented, and parents will be contacted immediately to discuss the behavior and strategies to prevent future incidents.
- **Third Incident:** Upon a third occurrence of physical behavior, the child will be removed from the situation, and parents will be contacted to pick up the child for the remainder of

the day. A meeting with the parents will be scheduled to discuss a comprehensive plan to address the behavior. Parents will be required to pick up their student within 1 hour of notification. If the student is not picked up within an hour a late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged. Unless otherwise stated, the child may return the next day.

## Safe Environment Policies

Montessori schools in Texas are required to comply with the state's child licensing safe environment policies. These policies are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children in licensed childcare facilities. The following ensure compliance with the Texas Health and Human Services Child Licensing Division.

1. **Criminal Background Checks:** All employees, including teachers and staff, must undergo a criminal background check before being employed at The Willow School.
2. **Health and Safety Requirements:** Montessori schools must comply with state health and safety requirements, which include providing a clean and safe environment, ensuring proper nutrition and hydration, and maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios.
3. **Training Requirements:** All employees must receive training on child abuse identification and reporting, as well as on other relevant topics related to child care and education.
4. **Emergency Preparedness:** Montessori schools must have policies and procedures in place to respond to emergencies, such as natural disasters, medical emergencies, and security threats.
5. **Child Abuse Reporting:** School staff are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.
6. **Supervision:** School staff must provide adequate supervision to ensure the safety of children at all times.
7. **Physical Environment:** School facilities must have a safe and appropriate physical environment, including age-appropriate toys and equipment, clean and well-maintained facilities, and secure outdoor play areas.

## **Child Licensing**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(24)**

Texas has strict licensing requirements for childcare facilities to ensure the safety and well-being of children in their care. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is responsible for licensing and regulating all child-care centers and homes in the state. These can be found by visiting:

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Care/Child\\_Care\\_Standards\\_and\\_Regulations/default.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Child_Care_Standards_and_Regulations/default.asp)

To obtain a license, child-care centers and homes must meet certain requirements, including background checks for staff members, safety standards for the physical environment, and appropriate ratios of staff to children. Facilities are also required to have a written plan for emergencies and to provide ongoing training for staff members.

The DFPS regularly inspects licensed facilities to ensure that they are meeting all requirements and providing a safe and healthy environment for children. Parents can access information about licensed facilities in their area through the DFPS website, and are encouraged to report any concerns or complaints about a facility to the agency.

## **Instructions for Parents: Contacting Local Licensing Office, Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline, and HHSC Website**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(23)**

#### **Contacting the Local Licensing Office:**

##### 1. Local Licensing Office:

Address: 4501 General Bruce Drive Suite 20, Temple, TX 76502

Phone Number: 254-770-2660

Website: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/safety/child-care/contact-child-care-regulation>

#### **Accessing the HHSC Website:**

##### 1. Visit the Website:

- To access the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) website, open your internet browser and navigate to the following URL: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/>

##### 2. Search for Information:

- Once on the website, use the search function or navigate through the menu to find the information you need. The website contains valuable resources on various health and human services topics, including child care licensing.

##### 3. Child Care Licensing Section:

- Look for the Child Care Licensing section on the HHSC website. This section may include information about licensing regulations, policies, and additional resources for parents.

#### 4. Contact Information:

- If you need to contact HHSC directly for specific inquiries, look for the contact information provided on the website. This may include phone numbers, email addresses, or online contact forms.

#### 5. Explore Resources:

- Take advantage of the resources available on the website, such as guidelines for parents, frequently asked questions, and any updates or announcements related to child care licensing.

### **Access to Licensing Inspection Reports:**

#### 1. Providing Copies:

- The school will maintain a copy of the most recent licensing inspection report on-site, and parents can request a physical copy at any time.

### **Procedure for Accessing Minimum Standards:**

#### 1. Notification of Changes:

- In the event of changes or updates to the minimum standards, parents will be promptly notified through communication channels such as newsletters, emails, or Brightwheel.

#### 2. Parent Handbook:

- The parent handbook, provided to parents upon enrollment, will include information on how to access and navigate the online resources containing the minimum standards.

#### 3. Online

- The school website [www.thewillowschooltx.com](http://www.thewillowschooltx.com) has a link to minimum standards as well as a PDF.

## **Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect Minimum Standards 746.501(25)**

### **Staff Training:**

#### 1. Annual Training Requirement:

- All staff members are required to undergo annual training on recognizing and responding to child abuse and neglect. Training will cover identifying signs, reporting procedures, and the legal responsibilities of staff.

#### 2. Continuous Education:

- Staff will receive ongoing education and updates related to child abuse prevention and intervention strategies. This may include workshops, seminars, and online resources.

### **Increasing Awareness:**

#### 1. Employee and Parent Awareness:

- Regular communication channels will be used to increase awareness among employees and parents regarding issues related to child abuse and neglect. This includes sharing information on warning signs, risk factors, and prevention techniques.

#### 2. Informational Materials:

- Posters, pamphlets, and other informational materials will be displayed in visible areas within the center to educate both staff and parents about the signs of abuse, risk factors, and preventive measures.

### **Coordination with Community Organizations:**

#### 1. Community Partnerships:

- The school will establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations that specialize in child protection. This may include collaborating with child advocacy centers, social services, and law enforcement.

#### 1. Communication Channels:

- Please report any suspected abuse immediately. The school will fully cooperate with investigating authorities. <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx>

### **Procedure for Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect:**

#### 1. Reporting:

- All staff members are mandatory reporters who will report suspected abuse or neglect. Please report any suspected abuse immediately. The school will fully cooperate with investigating authorities.
  - <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx>

## 2. Confidential Reporting:

- Staff members are trained to report suspicions of abuse or neglect in a confidential manner, ensuring the safety and privacy of the child involved.

## 3. Legal Obligations:

- Staff members are made aware of their legal obligations to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

## 4. Follow-Up Protocols:

- The school has established follow-up protocols to ensure that reported cases are appropriately addressed, investigated, and documented in compliance with state regulations.

## 5. Parent Reporting:

- If a parent suspects that their child is a victim of abuse or neglect, they should immediately report it to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) by calling the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or online at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org). The hotline is available 24/7, and callers can remain anonymous.
  - Understand the Purpose: The Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline is a resource for reporting suspected abuse or neglect of children. If you have concerns about a child's safety, this hotline is an essential tool for reporting.
  - Dial 1-800-252-5400: To report abuse or neglect, dial the Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400. This toll-free number is available 24/7 for reporting concerns related to child safety.
  - Provide Information: Be prepared to provide specific details about the situation, including the child's name, age, and any information related to the suspected abuse or neglect. Your identity will be kept confidential.
  - Follow Instructions:
    - Follow any instructions provided by the hotline operator. They may ask additional questions to gather necessary details for investigation purposes.
    - DFPS will investigate the report and take appropriate action to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. The agency may offer services to the family, such as counseling or parenting classes, to help prevent future incidents of abuse or neglect.
    - Parents can also seek assistance from local law enforcement and medical professionals, who are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to DFPS.
    - It's important for parents to take action as soon as possible if they suspect their child is a victim of abuse or neglect, as early intervention can help prevent further harm and promote healing.

## **Gang-Free Zone Policy**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(b)(2)**

#### **Policy Guidelines:**

##### 1. Zero Tolerance for Gang Activity:

- The Willow School maintains a zero-tolerance stance towards any form of gang-related activities, affiliations, or symbols within its premises. This includes but is not limited to, displaying gang signs, wearing gang-related attire, or engaging in any behavior associated with gang culture.

##### 2. Prohibition of Gang Apparel:

- Children, parents, staff, and visitors are prohibited from wearing any clothing, accessories, or displaying any symbols associated with gang affiliation. The school reserves the right to address and rectify any clothing or items deemed inappropriate or potentially linked to gang culture.

##### 3. Monitoring and Reporting:

- Staff members are trained to be vigilant in monitoring for signs of gang-related activities. Any suspected or observed gang-related behavior or symbols must be promptly reported to the center's management.

##### 4. Collaboration with Law Enforcement:

- The Willow School collaborates with local law enforcement agencies to stay informed about potential gang-related activities in the community. Any concerns or incidents will be reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

##### 5. Parent and Guardian Cooperation:

- Parents and guardians are expected to cooperate fully with the school in maintaining a gang-free environment. This includes refraining from wearing gang-related attire and educating their children about the center's policy on gang activities.

##### 6. Confidential Reporting Mechanism:

- The Willow School provides a confidential reporting mechanism for individuals who may have concerns about gang-related activities. This reporting system allows individuals to share information without fear of retaliation.

##### 7. Disciplinary Actions:

- Violation of the gang-free zone policy will result in appropriate disciplinary actions. This may include warnings, suspension, or, in severe cases, expulsion from the school. The nature of the disciplinary action will be determined based on the severity and recurrence of the violation.



# Classroom Environments

In Montessori education, mixed-aged classrooms are a fundamental aspect of the teaching philosophy. The Montessori method believes that children learn best in a social environment where they can interact with their peers and learn from each other.

In mixed-aged classrooms, children of different ages and skill levels are grouped together to create a diverse and dynamic learning community. Younger children can observe and learn from older children, while older children have the opportunity to reinforce their knowledge by teaching and guiding their younger peers.

This approach allows children to develop a sense of community and belonging, as they work and learn together in a collaborative environment. It also fosters a sense of independence and responsibility, as children are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and to help each other when needed.

Mixed-aged classrooms also provide opportunities for children to develop social skills and emotional intelligence, as they learn to interact with others who may have different personalities, backgrounds, and abilities. They learn to respect and appreciate differences, and to work together towards common goals.

Overall, the Montessori philosophy of mixed-aged classrooms is designed to encourage children to become independent, self-motivated learners who are equipped with the skills and knowledge to succeed both academically and in life.

## **Infant Classroom**

In a Montessori infant classroom, children aged six weeks to 15 months are provided with a safe and nurturing environment that supports their development in all areas. The classroom is designed to meet the unique needs of infants, with low shelves and furniture that allow them to move and explore freely. The space is filled with age-appropriate toys and materials that encourage exploration and stimulate the senses. Infants are given the opportunity to engage in activities that promote their physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development, such as grasping, crawling, and babbling.

The classroom is staffed by educators who understand the needs and abilities of infants. They provide gentle guidance and support as infants explore their surroundings and develop their skills. The educators also work closely with parents to ensure that each infant's individual needs are met. Infants are encouraged to develop their independence and self-confidence through exploration and discovery in a supportive and caring setting.

## **Toddler Classroom**

In a Montessori toddler classroom, children aged 15 months to 33 months are provided with a safe and stimulating environment that supports their natural curiosity and desire to explore. The classroom is designed to meet the unique needs of toddlers. The space is filled with Montessori materials that promote hands-on learning and encourage the development of fine and gross motor skills. Toddlers are given the opportunity to engage in activities that promote their physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development, such as pouring, sorting, and building.

The classroom is staffed by trained Montessori educators who understand the needs and abilities of toddlers. They provide gentle guidance and support as toddlers navigate their environment and develop their skills. The educators also work closely with parents to ensure that each toddler's individual needs are met. Toddlers are encouraged to develop their independence and self-confidence through exploration and discovery in a supportive and caring setting. They learn to communicate their needs and feelings, to respect others, and to work collaboratively with their peers. The Montessori toddler program sets a strong foundation for future learning and development.

## **Primary Classroom**

In a Montessori primary classroom, children aged 34 months to 6 years are provided with a rich and varied learning environment that fosters their natural curiosity and love of learning. The classroom is designed to meet the unique needs of young children, with child-sized furniture and materials that are carefully chosen to promote hands-on learning and exploration. Montessori principles focus on five key areas of learning.

### **Montessori Practical Life**

The Practical Life area of the classroom provides children with real-life activities that promote independence, concentration, and coordination. Children engage in activities such as pouring, sweeping, and setting a table, which not only help develop fine and gross motor skills, but also promote order, responsibility, and respect for the environment.

### **Sensorial**

The Sensorial area of the classroom provides children with activities that promote the development of their senses, such as touch, smell, taste, and sound. Children engage in activities such as matching colors, grading sizes, and identifying smells, which help develop their visual and auditory discrimination, as well as their ability to classify and order their environment.

### **Mathematics**

The Mathematics area of the classroom provides children with activities that promote the development of their mathematical understanding, such as counting, sorting, and measuring. Children engage in activities such as counting beads, matching numbers, and working with the decimal system, which help develop their understanding of mathematical concepts and their ability to think logically and abstractly.

### **Language**

The Language area of the classroom provides children with activities that promote the development of their language skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking. Children engage in activities such as phonetics, word building, and sentence analysis, which help develop their vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills.

### **Cultural Studies**

The Cultural Studies area of the classroom provides children with activities that promote an understanding of their place in the world and the interconnectedness of all living things. Children engage in activities such as geography, botany, and zoology, which help develop their understanding of the natural world and their respect for cultural diversity.

# Curriculum

The Willow School is a member of the American Montessori Society. Verification through the American Montessori Society will begin in the fall of 2024. The Willow School uses the Montessori method, fostering independent learning and hands-on experiences. We provide a comprehensive Montessori curriculum that empowers children to develop their full potential. Our curriculum includes practical life exercises, sensorial activities, language and math materials, cultural studies, a STEM program, and outdoor exploration. Staff members have access to a range of resources and tools to aid in curriculum development, including access to educational materials through the American Montessori Society, guidance from experienced educators, and opportunities for professional development. A well-planned curriculum is essential for meeting the unique needs of each student and promoting their overall development. We aim to provide individualized learning experiences that align with Montessori principles and educational standards. The following are links to offer an explanation of each resource and/or curriculum.

## Language

- [Waseca](#)
- Guided [reading](#)

## Mathematics

- Montessori-based [mathematics](#)

## Sensorial

- Montessori-based [sensorial](#)

## Practical Life

- Montessori-based practical [life](#)

## Cultural

- Montessori-based [cultural](#)

# Assessment

Assessing the progress and development of our students is an integral part of our educational approach at The Willow School. A thorough understanding of each child's abilities, strengths, and areas for growth is essential for tailoring their educational experience. These assessments include observations that are put in Brightwheel, academic assessments created by The Willow School, informal conversations to gather information about a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, and the Early Childhood Direction Center Developmental [Checklist](#). By regularly assessing our students, we can better understand their individual learning needs, track their progress, and make informed decisions to support their growth. Our staff is committed to using assessment results to guide curriculum planning and to communicate effectively with parents and caregivers about their child's development. Assessments will occur at the following times throughout the school year:

## Infant

- Twice a year (additionally as needed)
- Prior to a student transitioning from the infant to the toddler classroom

## Toddler

- Twice a year (additionally as needed)
- Prior to a student transitioning from the toddler to the primary classroom

## Primary

- When a new student enrolls in the primary classroom
- Fall
- Winter
- Spring

We strive to ensure that assessments are conducted in a respectful and supportive manner, with the child's best interests at heart.

## **Discipline and Guidance Policy**

### **Minimum Standard §746.2803**

#### **Philosophical Foundation:**

The Montessori approach to discipline and guidance is rooted in respect for the child as an individual and the belief that each child possesses an intrinsic motivation to learn and develop. The goal of discipline at the Willow School is to nurture the child's sense of self-discipline, independence, and responsibility while fostering a positive and respectful learning environment.

#### **Guiding Principles:**

1. Respect for the Child:
  - All staff members at the Willow School will treat each child with respect, acknowledging their unique qualities, needs, and abilities.
  - Staff members will receive ongoing training in positive discipline techniques and guidance to stay informed about best practices.
2. Positive Reinforcement:
  - Positive reinforcement will be emphasized, recognizing and praising desirable behaviors to encourage their repetition.
3. Modeling Behavior:
  - Staff members will serve as role models for children, demonstrating the values and behaviors expected within the Montessori environment.
4. Clear Expectations:
  - Clear and age-appropriate expectations for behavior will be communicated to children, allowing them to understand the boundaries and guidelines within the Montessori setting.

#### **Positive Discipline Techniques:**

1. Redirection:
  - When inappropriate behavior is observed, staff members will use redirection to guide the child towards a more suitable activity or behavior.
2. Conflict Resolution:
  - Children will be encouraged to express their feelings and resolve conflicts through positive communication. Staff members will facilitate discussions and help children find peaceful resolutions.
3. Choice and Autonomy
  - Providing choices and opportunities for autonomy is a key aspect of positive discipline. Children will be encouraged to make decisions within acceptable limits.
4. Natural Consequences:

- Whenever possible, natural consequences will be allowed to occur, providing children with the opportunity to learn from their actions in a supportive environment.

### **Limit-Setting and Boundaries:**

#### 1. Consistent Limits:

- Consistent limits will be set to create a secure and predictable environment. Children will be aware of these limits, promoting a sense of safety.

#### 2. Developmentally Appropriate Expectations:

- Expectations for behavior will be developmentally appropriate, recognizing the individual needs and stages of each child's development.

#### 3. Gentle Guidance:

- Gentle guidance will be employed to redirect behavior rather than punitive measures. Staff members will use a calm and composed approach in guiding children.

### **Communication with Parents:**

#### 1. Open Communication:

- The Willow School values open communication with parents. Staff members will communicate regularly about a child's behavior, achievements, and any concerns that may arise through the Brightwheel app.

#### 2. Collaborative Problem Solving:

- If persistent behavioral challenges occur, staff and parents will engage in collaborative problem-solving to address and understand the underlying factors contributing to the behavior.

### **Emergency Situations:**

#### 1. Emergency Intervention:

- In rare instances where a child's behavior poses an immediate threat to their safety or the safety of others, staff members are authorized to intervene in a manner that ensures the safety and well-being of everyone involved.



## **Meals and Food Service Practices Policy**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(10)**

#### **Parent Responsibilities:**

1. Food Provision: Parents or guardians are responsible for providing well-balanced, nutritious meals and snacks for their children, considering any dietary restrictions or allergies.
2. Food Safety: Parents or guardians should ensure that food sent to the school is properly stored, labeled with the child's name, and in compliance with relevant safety guidelines.
3. Allergies and Dietary Restrictions: Parents or guardians must inform the school of any allergies or dietary restrictions their child may have and provide clear instructions on managing these conditions. Guardians whose children have allergies or dietary restrictions will be required to meet with the administrators prior to their child starting to ensure a food plan is in place.
4. Containers Easy to Open: Parents or guardians are encouraged to pack meals in containers that are easy for children to open independently.

#### **Mealtime Practices:**

1. Supervision: The Willow School staff will supervise mealtime to ensure a safe and positive environment.
2. Social Interaction: Children will be encouraged to engage in social interaction during meals, fostering a sense of community and promoting healthy eating habits.
3. Dietary Education: Staff may provide information and education on healthy eating practices to parents and guardians to promote a consistent approach to nutrition.
4. Independence: Children are encouraged to bring meals that they can open and consume without assistance, promoting independence and self-help skills.

#### **Food Allergies and Special Diets:**

1. Notification: Parents or guardians must promptly inform the school of any changes in their child's dietary needs or newly identified allergies.
2. Communication: Staff will communicate with parents or guardians to ensure a clear understanding of specific dietary requirements and collaborate on appropriate meal options.

#### **Mealtime Schedule:**

1. Designated Meal Periods: Staff will establish designated meal periods to maintain a routine and ensure that all children have adequate time to consume their meals.
2. Snack Time: Snack time will be incorporated in the morning and afternoon with parents or guardians providing afternoon snacks for their children. Morning snacks will be provided by The Willow School.

**Food Handling and Storage:**

1. Lunch Box with Ice Pack: Parents or guardians are encouraged to pack meals in a lunch box with an ice pack to keep perishable items cold. Please ensure the lunch box is labeled with the child's name. Please send appropriate utensils for your child's age.

**Hygiene Practices:**

1. Handwashing: School staff will encourage children to wash their hands before and after meals to promote good hygiene.

2. Utensils and Containers: Parents or guardians should provide containers and utensils that are suitable for their child's age and developmental stage.

**Infant Feeding Plan:**

- A written feeding plan for children under twelve months of age must be completed and submitted by the families. This plan should be updated monthly or as new foods are added or other dietary changes are made.
- All baby bottles (including the cap) must be clearly labeled with the child's name and current date. Formula or expressed milk must be brought in appropriate amounts for feeding.
- Any milk warmed must be used within two hours or it will be discarded.
- Dry Cereal and unopened jar food may be left at the School until consumed.
- Please bring in foods that have been tried at least two times at home in order to protect against food allergies.

## **Breastfeeding Support Policy**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(24)**

#### **Breastfeeding Space:**

##### 1. Designated Comfortable Space:

- A designated and comfortable space with an adult-sized seat will be provided within the school. This space will be private, quiet, and equipped with a comfortable chair, a side table, and appropriate lighting.

##### 2. Comfortable Seating:

- Adult-sized seating will be chosen for its comfort and functionality. The chair will have armrests and proper support to enhance the comfort of the breastfeeding mother.

##### 3. Access to Electrical Outlets:

- The designated space will have access to electrical outlets to accommodate breast pumps if mothers choose to express milk during their visit.

#### **Welcoming Environment:**

##### 1. Non-Discriminatory Approach:

- The Willow School promotes a non-discriminatory approach towards breastfeeding mothers. Mothers will be encouraged to breastfeed or provide breast milk without fear of judgment or discrimination.

##### 2. Flexible Feeding Schedules:

- The school acknowledges and supports flexible feeding schedules to accommodate the needs of breastfeeding mothers and their infants.

## **Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activity Promotion Policy**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(18)(A-D, F&G)**

#### **Philosophical Foundation:**

Recognizing the importance of physical activity in a child's overall development, our Montessori school is committed to promoting a healthy and active lifestyle. This policy outlines the strategies and principles employed to encourage indoor and outdoor physical activities that align with Montessori philosophy.

#### **Indoor Physical Activity:**

##### 1. Movement-Friendly Environment:

- Classrooms will be designed to facilitate movement and physical engagement. There will be adequate space for children to move freely and engage in activities that support their physical development.

##### 2. Movement Materials:

- Indoor environments will include Montessori materials that promote gross motor skills, coordination, and balance, fostering physical development within the context of the Montessori curriculum. Students will be provided with indoor age-appropriate materials such as a Pikler triangle and walking stairs.

##### 3. Structured Movement Activities:

- Daily schedules will include structured movement activities such as yoga, dance, and indoor physical games that align with the Montessori principles of purposeful movement.

##### 4. Child-Led Activities:

- Children will be encouraged to choose movement activities based on their interests and developmental needs. Staff will facilitate and support these child-led initiatives.

#### **Outdoor Physical Activity:**

##### 1. Outdoor Play Areas:

- The outdoor play areas will be designed to provide a safe and stimulating environment for physical play. Equipment and materials will be age-appropriate and encourage active exploration. The Willow School will provide a natural playground with age-appropriate outdoor equipment such as a wooden race track, a music wall, and an art wall.

##### 2. Daily Outdoor Time:

- A dedicated time for outdoor play will be incorporated into the daily schedule. This time allows children to benefit from fresh air, sunshine, and physical activity.

##### 3. Nature Exploration:

- Outdoor spaces will be used for nature-based activities, gardening, and exploration, aligning with the Montessori emphasis on connecting children with the natural world.

#### 4. Physical Challenges:

- Outdoor play areas will include elements that provide physical challenges such as climbing structures, balance beams, and open spaces for running and group games.

### **Integrating Physical Activity with Learning:**

#### 1. Physical Activity Breaks:

- Short physical activity breaks will be incorporated into the academic schedule to energize children and enhance their focus on learning activities.

#### 2. Movement in Lessons:

- Montessori lessons will include elements of purposeful movement, integrating physical activity with cognitive development. For example, walking a line while counting or tracing shapes with large arm movements.

#### 3. Outdoor Lessons:

- Weather permitting, certain lessons may be taken outdoors, allowing children to engage in learning activities while benefiting from the natural environment.

### **Extreme Weather:**

- When it comes to extreme weather conditions that may pose a significant health risk for children and limit their outdoor playtime, we take several factors into consideration before making a decision. These may include:
  - Temperature
  - Humidity
  - Air quality
  - Presence of extreme weather events such as thunderstorms, hurricanes, or tornadoes.

Our primary concern is the safety and well-being of the children in our care, and we will follow guidelines from reputable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Weather Service, and local health authorities.

- In the event that outdoor play is prohibited or limited due to extreme weather conditions, we have a plan in place to ensure that physical activity still occurs indoors. This may include structured activities and games, dance parties, yoga, or other fun and engaging exercises that get children moving and promote their overall health and well-being. We have indoor equipment such as Pikler climbing triangles to allow students movement around the room. We understand the importance of physical activity for children's development and will do our best to provide opportunities for movement and play even when outdoor play is not possible.

## **Footwear and Clothing Policy**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(18)(E)**

#### **Shoes**

1. Indoor shoes: We ask that all students have indoor shoes to be only worn inside the classroom. These shoes need to be closed-toe shoes with a flat sole. Please no light-up shoes, flip flops, or sandals.
2. Outdoor shoes: We ask that all students have outdoor shoes to be only worn outside the classroom. These shoes need to be closed-toe shoes with a flat sole. Please no light up shoes.
  - Please provide rainboots for wet days as well as for gardening.

#### **Clothing**

1. Students should wear comfortable and modest clothing suitable for both indoor and outdoor activities. Clothing should allow for ease of movement and be appropriate for the weather.
2. Minimalistic accessories are encouraged to avoid distractions. Jewelry and accessories that pose a safety risk during activities are discouraged.
3. Hats and Sunscreen: During outdoor activities, students are encouraged to wear hats for sun protection. Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen before school, and students may bring their own sunscreen for reapplication.
4. Due to state licensing standards, children in the infant classroom may not wear any type of teething necklaces, bracelets, or anklets. This includes amber necklaces, bracelets, and anklets.
5. Due to state licensing standards, children may not have pacifiers with attachments. This includes beads, stuffed animals, etc. We strongly encourage no pacifiers in general, due to the health concern of sharing.

#### **Special Events or Activities:**

For special events or activities that deviate from the standard dress code, parents will be notified in advance to ensure appropriate attire.

#### **Toys from Home**

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child.

# Parental Policies

## Parental Review and Discussion Procedures Minimum Standards 746.501(20)

### Initiating the Review and Discussion Process:

#### 1. Scheduled Meetings:

- Parents are encouraged to schedule meetings with the school director to discuss any questions or concerns they may have about the policies and procedures. These meetings can be arranged by sending a message to administration through Brightwheel or by e-mailing administration at [thewillowschooltx@outlook.com](mailto:thewillowschooltx@outlook.com).

#### 2. Communication Channels:

- Parents may choose to initiate discussions through the Brightwheel Application or by e-mailing [thewillowschooltx@outlook.com](mailto:thewillowschooltx@outlook.com). The center director will respond promptly and coordinate a meeting if necessary.

#### 3. Review Materials:

- Parents are provided with a copy of the school's policies and procedures handbook upon enrollment. This handbook serves as a reference guide and includes information on various aspects such as health and safety, daily routines, discipline, and enrollment requirements.

### Meeting Procedures:

#### 1. Scheduled Time:

- Meetings between parents and the school director will be scheduled at mutually convenient times. Efforts will be made to accommodate varying schedules.

#### 2. Discussion Agenda:

- Parents are encouraged to prepare a list of specific questions or concerns they would like to address during the meeting. This helps ensure a focused and productive discussion.

#### 3. Documentation:

- If parents have concerns related to specific policies or incidents, they are encouraged to bring any relevant documentation or written notes to aid in the discussion.

#### 4. Parental Input:

- The school director will actively listen to parental concerns and seek input on potential improvements or adjustments to policies, if deemed necessary and within the scope of the center's guidelines.

## **Parent Participation Procedures**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(18)(E)**

#### **Objective:**

This set of procedures is designed to encourage and facilitate active parental involvement in the operation and activities of the school. By fostering a collaborative partnership between parents and the center, we aim to create a supportive and enriching environment for the children.

#### **Parental Involvement Opportunities:**

##### 1. Open House and Orientation:

- At the beginning of each academic year, The Willow School will organize an open house or orientation session to introduce parents to the center's staff, policies, and curriculum. This serves as an opportunity to discuss ways parents can participate in the center's activities.

##### 2. Parent-Teacher Conferences:

- Regular parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled to discuss the child's progress, development, and address any concerns. These conferences provide a platform for parents to actively engage in their child's educational journey. Please see the calendar for parent-teacher conference days. Please inform your child's teacher beforehand if you are unable to meet with them on the scheduled date so they can set up another conference time.

##### 3. Volunteer Opportunities:

- Parents will be invited to volunteer for various activities or special events. Most volunteer opportunities will be coordinated through the Parent Teacher Association. If you would like to regularly volunteer and will be on campus more than twice a month for extended periods of time, Health and Human Services requires a background check.

##### 4. Parent Association:

- The Willow School Parent Teacher Association was formed to address specific areas such as fundraising, special events, or policy review. This association will provide an avenue for parents to contribute their skills and insights.

##### 5. Parent Education Workshops:

- The school will organize workshops or seminars on topics related to early childhood education, parenting, and child development. Parents are encouraged to attend these sessions to enhance their understanding of their child's learning environment.

##### 6. Parent-Child Activities:

- Periodic activities or events will be organized where parents can actively participate with their children, promoting bonding and engagement. These may include family picnics, art exhibitions, or cultural celebrations.



#### 7. Surveys and Feedback Sessions:

- Parents will be given opportunities to provide feedback through surveys or feedback sessions. The feedback collected will be used to assess and enhance the overall experience at the school.

#### **Communication Channels:**

##### 1. Regular Newsletters:

- The Willow Schools will distribute regular newsletters through the Brightwheel Application to keep parents informed about upcoming events, activities, and opportunities for participation.

##### 2. Parent Communication Platform:

- The Brightwheel Application will be utilized for all real-time communication between parents and staff. This platform will provide updates, event notifications, and a forum for discussions. Please do not contact staff members outside of the Brightwheel Application.

#### **Recognition and Appreciation:**

##### 1. Acknowledgment of Contributions:

- The school will publicly acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of parents through newsletters, social media, or other platforms. Recognition may include highlighting volunteer efforts, special skills, or assistance provided.

##### 2. Certificates of Appreciation:

- Certificates of appreciation may be awarded to parents who actively participate in center activities, volunteer consistently, or contribute significantly to the center's initiatives.

## **Open Visitation Policy for Parents Minimum Standards 746.501(b)**

### **Policy Guidelines:**

#### 1. Unrestricted Visitation Hours:

- Parents are welcome to visit The Willow School at any time during our regular hours of operation, which are 7:00 am- 6:00 pm. We believe in an open-door policy that promotes transparency and inclusivity.

#### 2. Observation of Child and Program Activities:

- Parents are encouraged to observe their child, participate in program activities, and witness the daily routines of the school. This includes but is not limited to classroom activities, playtime, meals, and any special events.

#### 3. Exploration of the Building and Premises:

- Parents may explore the building and premises during their visit. This includes common areas, classrooms, outdoor play spaces, and any designated areas relevant to the school

#### 4. Access to Equipment and Resources:

- Parents are allowed to inspect and observe the equipment and resources used. This transparency ensures that parents are aware of the tools and materials contributing to their child's learning and development.

#### 5. Respectful Observational Approach:

- While parents are encouraged to actively participate and observe, it is essential to maintain a respectful and non-disruptive approach to minimize any potential impact on the children's daily routines.

#### 6. Visitor Check-In Procedure:

- For security purposes, parents are required to check into the office upon arrival. This check-in process helps maintain a record of visitors within the premises.

#### 7. Confidentiality and Privacy:

- While parents have the freedom to observe, they are expected to respect the confidentiality and privacy of other children, parents, and staff members. Discussions involving individual children or families should be conducted in private spaces.

#### 8. Emergency Situations:

- In emergency situations or during special circumstances, the school reserves the right to limit or restrict visitation to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in our care.

## **Release of Children**

### **Minimum Standards 746.4101. and 746.4103**

#### **Release Authorization:**

1. Authorized Individuals:
  - Only individuals listed on the child's enrollment records as authorized to pick up the child will be allowed to do so.
  - Any changes to the list of authorized individuals must be communicated in writing by the parent or legal guardian.
2. Verification Process:
  - Upon arrival for pick-up, individuals must provide a valid photo ID for verification purposes.
  - The Willow School staff will cross-reference the individual's ID with the list of authorized pick-up persons before releasing the child.

#### **Release Time and Notification:**

1. Scheduled Release Times:
  - If you are picking up prior to 3:00 pm, please reach out to administration as to not disrupt students who may be sleeping or engaged in lessons.
2. Notification of Delays:
  - In the event of unforeseen delays in pick-up, parents or guardians are expected to notify the school promptly.
  - The staff will ensure the child's comfort and well-being until the authorized individual arrives.

#### **Emergency Release Procedures:**

1. Emergency Contact Information:
  - The Willow School must have up-to-date emergency contact information for each child.
  - In the case of an emergency, the designated emergency contacts will be notified if the primary contact is unavailable.
2. Designated Emergency Pick-Up Persons:
  - Parents or guardians must provide the school with a list of designated emergency pick-up persons. These individuals will be authorized to pick up the child in case of an emergency when the parent or legal guardian cannot be reached.

**Communication Protocols:**

## 1. Written Authorization:

- Any changes to the pick-up routine, including the addition or removal of authorized individuals, must be communicated in writing, e-mail or a note, by the parent or legal guardian.

## 2. Verbal Authorization:

Verbal authorization for temporary changes to the pick-up routine may be accepted if communicated directly to the staff by the parent or legal guardian. This will be documented and verified.

**Documentation:**

## 1. Record Keeping:

- The school will maintain accurate and up-to-date records of authorized pick-up persons, emergency contacts, and any changes communicated by parents or guardians.

## **Parent's Right to Immediate Access Minimum Standards 746.501(b)(1)**

### **Unplanned Custody Issues:**

#### **1. Court Orders and Custody Disputes:**

- In the case of court-issued custody orders or custody disputes, the school will follow legal directives provided by the appropriate authorities.

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at The Willow School, as provided by law. In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) The Willow School must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order. In the absence of a court order on file with The Willow School, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. The Willow School cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, The Willow School suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. The Willow School staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise. An employee of The Willow School will always accompany visitors throughout the center.

The Willow School will dismiss any child whose parent is prohibited from entering upon school property. Due to the parents' right to immediate access policy, as well as state and federal regulations, The Willow School cannot have a child at the school when the child's parent is prohibited from accessing it. The Willow School will not agree to any request to maintain a child's enrollment even if the parent agrees to stay out of the school. Such an agreement is a violation of the law and will not be entertained.

The staff of The Willow School will contact local police and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to the staff to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's right to immediate access does not permit the school from denying a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is or appears to be impaired. However, The Willow School staff will delay the impaired parent as long as possible, while contacting the other parent, the local police, and Child Protective Services.

Any other authorized person who attempts to pick-up a child and appears to the staff to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be denied access to the child. The staff of The Willow School will contact the child's parents, local police and Child Protective Services to notify them of the situation.

## **Parent Communication**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(6)**

#### **General Communication:**

##### 1. Regular Updates:

- Parents will receive regular updates through the Brightwheel Application. Please do not contact staff members outside of the Brightwheel Application.

##### 2. Parent-Teacher Conferences:

- Scheduled parent-teacher conferences will be conducted in the fall and the spring to discuss a child's progress, development, and any concerns. Please see the school calendar for conference dates.

##### 3. Incident Reporting:

- At our school, we take the safety and well-being of our students seriously. For incidents involving behavior or injuries, we use Brightwheel to document and communicate with parents.

Here is how we handle different types of incidents:

- **Behavioral Incidents:** When a behavioral incident occurs, it is documented in Brightwheel with details such as the date and time of the incident, a description of the behavior, actions taken by staff, and any follow-up steps. Parents will be notified through Brightwheel incident reporting.
- **Minor Injuries:** For minor injuries, such as small cuts or bruises, a report will be created in Brightwheel, providing details of the incident, including the date, time, location, and nature of the injury, as well as any first aid administered. Parents will receive this report via Brightwheel incident reporting.
- **Major Incidents or Injuries:** In the case of major incidents or injuries, a detailed incident/illness report will be filled out, covering the specifics of the incident, actions taken by staff, and any medical care provided. Parents will be contacted directly and asked to sign the report, acknowledging the details and any required follow-up actions.

#### **Events and Activities:**

##### 1. Upcoming Events:

- Parents will receive advance notice of upcoming events, activities, or outings organized by the school. This may include celebrations or special presentations.

#### **Positive Achievements and Milestones:**

##### 1. Celebration of Achievements:

- Parents will be notified of their child's positive achievements, milestones, or noteworthy moments in the school. This may include academic accomplishments, social achievements, or developmental milestones.

**Communication Platforms:**

## 1. Preferred Communication Method:

- Parents will specify their preferred communication method (email, phone call, text, or app) during the enrollment process, and the school will use this method for routine and urgent communications.

## 2. Two-Way Communication:

- The school encourages parents to communicate any concerns, feedback, or relevant information about their child. Two-way communication is vital for a collaborative and supportive partnership.

# Tuition

At our school, tuition is paid once a month and covers the cost of your child's education, including classroom materials, facility maintenance, and teacher salaries.

Payment is due on the fifth of every month. Tuition is paid through Brightwheel. Parents must be set up on ACH draft.

If you have any questions about our tuition or payment options, please don't hesitate to contact our office. Tuition and fees will remain the same for the entire program selected. There will be no reduction of tuition or fees for absences, holidays, withdrawal, or disenrollment. Tuition and fees are not prorated irrespective of the start or drop date during the month.

If a child is absent due to illness or vacation, tuition fees are still due and payable.

## **Late payment**

If payment is not received by the due date, a late fee of \$10 per day will be assessed. If tuition is two weeks or more overdue, the child may be suspended from the program until payment is received.

## **Insufficient Funds**

If tuition is returned due to insufficient funds, a \$25 initial fee will be assessed, with the addition of a \$10 fee every day after, and the parent or guardian will be required to provide an alternative form of payment. If payment is not received within a reasonable time frame, the child may be suspended from the program until payment is received.

We understand that financial difficulties may arise, and we encourage parents or guardians to communicate with us if they are experiencing difficulties in paying tuition fees.



# Health Policies

## Safe Sleep

### Minimum Standards 746.501(9)

#### Design and Materials:

##### 1. Low and Firm Mattresses:

- Floor beds will consist of low, firm mattresses placed directly on the floor. The mattress height will allow for easy access and independence for infants.

##### 2. Avoidance of Loose Bedding:

- To avoid suffocation, nothing is allowed in the crib but the infant, including blankets and stuffed animals. Sleep positioning devices are prohibited unless instructed by the child's health care professional. An "Infant Sleep Exception" form must be completed by the health care professional.

#### Placement of Floor Beds:

##### 1. Individual Sleep Spaces:

- Each infant will have a designated floor bed to ensure personal space and comfort.

##### 2. Accessible Arrangement:

- Floor beds will be arranged to allow easy observation by Montessori staff, promoting a safe and monitored sleep environment.

##### 3. Back Sleeping

- All infants will be placed on their backs to ensure safe sleep.

#### Parental Communication:

- Parents will be provided with orientation and guidance on the use of floor beds in infant classrooms, including the benefits and safety measures.

#### Staff Training:

##### 1. Safe Sleep Practices:

- All staff members responsible for the care of infants will undergo training on safe sleep practices, including the specifics of floor beds.

##### 2. Observation and Supervision:

- Staff will be trained to observe and supervise infants on floor beds, ensuring their safety and responding promptly to any signs of discomfort or distress.

## **Illness and Exclusion Criteria**

### **746.501(3)**

#### **Illness Notification:**

##### 1. Parental Responsibility:

- Parents or guardians are responsible for informing the school immediately if their child is ill, exhibiting symptoms of illness, or has been diagnosed with a contagious disease, including head lice.

##### 2. Symptoms Requiring Notification:

- Parents should notify the school if their child exhibits symptoms such as fever, persistent cough, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting, rash, or any other symptoms indicative of illness, including the presence of head lice.

##### 3. Communication Method:

- Parents are encouraged to communicate illness-related information through direct contact with the school director.

#### **Exclusion Criteria:**

##### 1. Fever:

- A child with a fever of 100°F (38°C) or higher will not be allowed to attend the school until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

##### 2. Communicable Diseases:

- Children diagnosed with a contagious disease (e.g., chickenpox, strep throat, conjunctivitis) must remain excluded from the school until they are no longer contagious and have received medical clearance to return.

##### 3. Diarrhea and Vomiting:

- Children experiencing diarrhea or vomiting will be excluded from the school until they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours.

##### 4. Respiratory Infections:

- Children with respiratory infections, including persistent coughing or difficulty breathing, will be excluded until they are no longer contagious and have recovered sufficiently to participate in regular activities.

##### 5. Rashes:

- Children with unexplained rashes must be excluded until a healthcare professional provides a diagnosis and confirms that the rash is non-contagious.

#### 6. Head Lice:

- Children with an active case of head lice will be excluded until they have been treated and are free of live lice. The school will follow specific head lice protocols for treatment and re-entry.

#### **Return to School:**

##### 1. Medical Clearance:

- Children excluded due to illness must provide a written note from a healthcare professional confirming that they are no longer contagious and are cleared to return to school.

##### 2. Minimum Exclusion Period:

- Children excluded due to certain contagious diseases or head lice may be required to complete a minimum exclusion period as determined by public health guidelines or the school's health policies.

#### **Communication with Parents:**

##### 1. Timely Communication:

- The school will communicate promptly with parents or guardians when a child exhibits symptoms of illness or requires exclusion due to illness, including head lice. Children are to be picked up within 1 hour of notification.

##### 2. Privacy and Sensitivity:

- The school will handle illness-related information, including head lice, with the utmost privacy and sensitivity, maintaining confidentiality in accordance with applicable regulations.

## **Dispensing Medication, Applying Sunscreen, and Bug Spray Provided by Parents**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(4)**

#### **Dispensing Medication:**

##### 1. Written Authorization:

- Parents or guardians must provide written authorization for the school staff to dispense any medication to their child. This authorization must include the child's full name, the name of the medication, dosage instructions, purpose, and any potential side effects. Medication may not be transported to the classroom by families. No medication may be placed in the child's bag or taken into the classroom. Please ensure medication is handed to an administrator in the front office.
- The Willow School will only dispense prescription medication that is prescribed three or more times in a day. Medication prescribed once or twice a day must be given at home by the guardian.

##### 2. Medication in Original Packaging:

- All medication must be provided in its original packaging, including the prescription label with the child's name, medication details, and instructions.
- Over-the-counter medication should be in the original, sealed packaging with clearly labeled dosage information.

##### 3. Storage of Medication:

- Medications requiring refrigeration must be stored in a designated refrigerator, inaccessible to children.
- All other medications will be stored in a secure location, out of reach of children.

##### 4. Trained Staff Administration:

- Only trained and authorized staff members will administer medication to children.
- Medication will be administered according to the written authorization provided by the parent or guardian.

##### 5. Documentation:

- Staff will maintain accurate and up-to-date records of each instance of medication administration, including the child's name, the medication administered, dosage, time, and the signature of the staff member.

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(19)**

#### **Applying Sunscreen and Bug Spray:**

##### 1. Written Authorization:

- Parents or guardians must provide written authorization for the school staff to apply sunscreen and bug spray to their child. This authorization must include the child's full name, specific application instructions, and any known allergies. This will be sent in Brightwheel and must be filled out prior to any sunscreen or bug spray application.

## 2. Parent-Provided Products:

- Parents are responsible for providing sunscreen and bug spray for their child, clearly labeled with the child's name.
- Products should be in their original packaging and meet the school's requirements for safety and effectiveness.

## 3. Application Procedures:

- Sunscreen and bug spray will be applied to exposed skin areas as specified in the written authorization.
- Staff will ensure that sunscreen and bug spray are applied in a manner that respects the child's dignity and comfort.

## 4. Storage of Products:

- Parent-provided sunscreen and bug spray will be stored in a designated area, accessible only to staff, and out of reach of children.

## **Emergency Situations:**

- In the case of an emergency or if a child exhibits adverse reactions to medication, sunscreen, or bug spray, the school will follow its emergency procedures and promptly notify parents or guardians.

## **Fire/Emergency Drills**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(5)(23)**

The Willow School conducts monthly fire and emergency/evacuation drills. Parents, staff and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/emergency, the director or designate will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone of the situation. As with the sick child pick up policy, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

Parents wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency are expected to have patience with the staff as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the school is during a fire/emergency drill, parents will be required to wait until the drill is completed and the staff and children are returned to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the school is having a real fire/emergency, parents will be asked to wait until the director or designee has accounted for all staff and children and gives the staff permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

Parents may review the complete The Willow School Emergency Preparedness Plan posted on the Parent Communication Board.

## **Alternate Safe Location**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(23)**

Should the administration of The Willow School or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the child care agency to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to an alternate location detailed in The Willow School Emergency Preparedness Plan. Once the children are assembled here, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

## **Hearing and Vision Screening Policy**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(12)**

#### **Hearing Screening:**

1. Age-Appropriate Hearing Tests: Children enrolled in the school will undergo age-appropriate hearing screenings as recommended by health authorities.
2. Frequency of Hearing Screenings: Hearing screenings will be conducted at specified intervals, typically upon enrollment and at regular intervals thereafter, to detect any changes or emerging issues.
3. Professional Screening Providers: Hearing screenings will be conducted by qualified and licensed professionals, including audiologists or trained healthcare practitioners.

#### **Vision Screening:**

1. Age-Appropriate Vision Tests: Children enrolled in the school will undergo age-appropriate vision screenings as recommended by health authorities.
2. Frequency of Vision Screenings: Vision screenings will be conducted at specified intervals, to detect any changes or emerging issues.

#### **Communication with Parents or Guardians:**

1. Notification of Screening: Parents or guardians will be notified in advance of scheduled hearing and vision screenings, along with the purpose and importance of these screenings.
2. Results Communication: In the event that a child's screening results indicate potential concerns, parents or guardians will be promptly notified. Recommendations for further evaluation or follow-up care will be provided.

#### **Exemptions:**

1. Medical Exemptions: Children with documented medical conditions that may interfere with the hearing or vision screening process may be eligible for medical exemptions. A written statement from a licensed healthcare provider is required in such cases.
2. Parental Opt-Out: Parents or guardians may choose to opt-out of hearing or vision screenings for their child based on personal or religious beliefs. Such decisions must be communicated in writing.

#### **Follow-Up Procedures:**

1. Referral for Further Evaluation: If hearing or vision screenings indicate potential issues, the school will work collaboratively with parents or guardians to facilitate referrals for further evaluation by appropriate healthcare professionals.
2. Documentation of Follow-Up Care: Parents or guardians are responsible for providing documentation of any follow-up care or intervention recommended by healthcare professionals.

## **Medical Emergency Policy Minimum Standards 746.501(5)**

### **Emergency Contacts and Medical Information:**

1. Parents or guardians must provide up-to-date emergency contact information for each child enrolled in the school.
2. Staff members should maintain a current and accessible list of emergency contacts, including any relevant medical information, allergies, and special conditions for each child.

### **Emergency Training:**

1. All staff members are required to undergo regular training in first aid and CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation).
2. The designated staff responsible for the children during each shift must be trained to handle common medical emergencies, such as allergic reactions, asthma attacks, and injuries.

### **Emergency Response Procedures:**

1. In the event of a medical emergency, the staff member on duty will assess the situation quickly and take immediate action to ensure the safety and well-being of the child.
2. If necessary, the staff member will administer basic first aid or CPR, following the guidelines learned during training.
3. Emergency services will be contacted immediately by dialing [local emergency number].
4. Another staff member will be assigned to contact the child's parents or guardians to inform them of the situation and provide details on the actions being taken.

### **Communication with Parents or Guardians:**

1. Parents or guardians will be notified of any medical emergency as soon as possible.
2. Staff members will communicate the nature of the emergency, the steps being taken, and any additional information required.
3. If the emergency requires hospitalization or specialized medical care, parents or guardians will be informed of the location and expected arrival time.

### **Follow-Up Procedures:**

1. After the resolution of a medical emergency, the school will conduct a thorough review of the incident.
2. A report detailing the nature of the emergency, actions taken, and any recommendations for preventing similar incidents will be documented.
3. Parents or guardians will be provided with a written summary of the incident and any follow-up recommendations.



## **Immunization Policy**

### **Minimum Standards 746.603 (3 and 4)**

#### **Immunization Requirements:**

1. Compliance with State and Local Regulations: The school will adhere to immunization requirements mandated by the Texas Department of State Health Services and the local health authority. This includes but is not limited to vaccinations against measles, mumps, rubella, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Haemophilus influenza type b, hepatitis B, and varicella.
2. TB Screening and Testing: If required by the regional Texas Department of State Health Services or local health authority, the school will implement TB screening and testing procedures for children. This may involve a skin test or other methods specified by the health authority.

#### **Enrollment Procedures:**

1. Documentation: Parents or guardians must provide complete and up-to-date immunization records for their child at the time of enrollment. This documentation should include the child's name, date of birth, and a detailed record of vaccinations received. You submit your child's vaccine records to the school as new vaccinations are received. This ensures that we have the most up-to-date information on file.
2. TB Screening Documentation: If required, parents or guardians must also provide documentation of TB screening or testing in accordance with the regulations set forth by the Texas Department of State Health Services or the local health authority.

#### **Exemptions:**

1. Medical Exemptions: The school may consider medical exemptions for children with documented medical conditions that contraindicate certain vaccinations. A written statement from a licensed healthcare provider is required in such cases.
2. Religious or Philosophical Exemptions: If permitted by state and local regulations, the school may consider exemptions based on religious or philosophical beliefs. Parents or guardians must submit a written statement outlining their objection to specific vaccinations.

#### **Notification of Non-Compliance:**

1. Communication with Parents or Guardians: If a child's immunization records are incomplete or do not meet the required standards, the school will promptly notify the parents or guardians. They will be given a specified timeframe to provide the necessary documentation or address any deficiencies.
2. Temporary Exclusion: If required immunizations or TB screening documentation are not provided within the designated timeframe, the school may temporarily exclude the child from enrollment until compliance is achieved.

## **Health Checks Procedures**

### **Minimum Standards 746.501(27)**

#### **Daily Health Checks:**

##### 1. Morning Arrival:

- Upon arrival each morning, staff members will conduct a visual health check on each child. This includes observing for signs of illness, such as coughing, sneezing, unusual fatigue, or any visible symptoms of illness.

##### 2. Temperature Check:

- In case of any visible signs of illness, a non-invasive temperature check may be conducted using a forehead thermometer. A child with a fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher) will not be allowed to stay at the school.

#### **Parental Communication:**

##### 1. Prompt Notification:

- Parents will be promptly notified if their child exhibits signs of illness during the visual health check. Clear communication channels will be maintained to ensure parents are aware of their child's health status.

##### 2. Exclusion Policy:

- Clearly communicate the center's exclusion policy, specifying the criteria under which a child should be kept at home due to illness. This information will be included in the parent handbook and discussed during orientation sessions.

#### **Health Records:**

##### 1. Updated Medical Records:

- Ensure that each child's medical records are up-to-date, including information on vaccinations, allergies, and any ongoing medical conditions. Parents are required to provide updated medical information during enrollment and as changes occur.

##### 2. Emergency Contact Information:

- Maintain accurate and updated emergency contact information for each child. This includes contact numbers for parents, guardians, and alternative emergency contacts.

#### **Regular Monitoring:**

##### 1. Observation during Activities:

- Staff members will continuously observe children during indoor and outdoor activities for any signs of illness or distress. Immediate attention will be given to a child who appears unwell.

##### 2. Handwashing Practices:

- Reinforce regular handwashing practices among children and staff. Proper hand hygiene is crucial in preventing the spread of illnesses. Staff will actively monitor and assist children in maintaining good handwashing habits.

**Response to Illness:**

## 1. Isolation Protocol:

- In the event that a child exhibits symptoms of a contagious illness, an isolation protocol will be implemented. The child will be separated from the group and supervised by a staff member until the parent arrives for pick-up.

## 2. Emergency Medical Assistance:

- In cases of severe illness or emergencies, the school will seek immediate medical assistance and notify parents promptly.

**Cleaning and Sanitization:**

## 1. Regular Disinfection:

- Implement a regular schedule for disinfecting and sanitizing commonly touched surfaces, toys, and play equipment to minimize the risk of spreading infections.

## 2. Education on Preventive Measures:

- Educate both children and staff on preventive measures, such as covering mouths when coughing or sneezing, disposing of tissues properly, and avoiding contact with others when feeling unwell.

## 3. Regular Training:

- Staff members will receive ongoing training on health check procedures, recognizing signs of illness, and implementing preventive measures.

# Inclusive Services for Children with Special Care Needs Procedures

## Minimum Standards 746.501(30)

### 1. Identification and Assessment:

#### Collaboration with Parents:

- Establish open communication with parents to understand their child's specific needs, abilities, and any necessary accommodations. Parents are encouraged to share relevant information during the enrollment process.

#### Professional Assessment:

- Engage with qualified professionals, such as pediatricians, therapists, or educators, to conduct an assessment of the child's needs and strengths. This assessment will inform the development of an Individualized Care Plan (ICP) as feasible with the Montessori Philosophy.

### 2. Individualized Care Plans (ICPs):

#### Collaborative Planning:

- Collaborate with parents, caregivers, and professionals to develop individualized care plans for children with special care needs. These plans should include specific strategies, accommodations, and goals tailored to meet each child's unique requirements as feasible with the Montessori Philosophy.

#### Regular Review and Update:

- Regularly review and update the Individualized Care Plans to reflect the child's progress and address any changing needs. This process involves ongoing communication with parents and professionals involved in the child's care.

### 3. Inclusive Environment:

#### Accessible Facilities:

- Ensure that the school's facilities are accessible to children with diverse needs. This includes physical modifications, such as ramps or wider doorways, to accommodate various abilities as feasible.

#### Adapted Learning Materials:

- Provide adapted learning materials and equipment to support children with sensory, cognitive, or motor challenges. This may include tactile materials, visual aids, and specialized seating arrangements as feasible.

#### Utilization of Adaptive Equipment:

- Utilize any adaptive equipment that has been provided to the center for a child's use. Ensure that such equipment is integrated seamlessly into the child's daily activities to enhance their participation as feasible.

#### 4. Trained Staff:

##### Inclusive Training:

- Ensure that all staff members receive training on inclusive practices. This training should cover understanding different disabilities, effective communication strategies, and positive behavior support.

##### Continuous Professional Development:

- Encourage ongoing professional development for staff to stay informed about the latest inclusive practices and strategies.

#### 5. Inclusive Programming:

##### Individualized Education Support:

- Collaborate with educational specialists to incorporate individualized education support within the regular curriculum. This may involve modifying teaching methods, providing additional resources, or offering one-on-one assistance as feasible.

##### Therapeutic Services Integration:

- Coordinate with therapists (occupational, speech, physical, etc.) to integrate therapeutic services seamlessly into the child's daily routine, ensuring consistent support for their developmental needs.

#### 6. Communication and Collaboration:

##### Regular Communication:

- Establish open and regular communication channels with parents, caregivers, and professionals involved in the child's care. This communication ensures a holistic approach to supporting the child's well-being.

##### Parent Involvement:

- Encourage parents to actively participate in their child's care and education. This involvement includes attending meetings, providing feedback, and collaborating with staff to optimize the child's experience.

#### 7. Transition Planning:

- Develop transition plans for children moving between different age groups or educational settings within the center. This ensures a smooth and supportive transition, including the transfer of relevant information and strategies.

8. Community Partnerships:

- Collaborate with external organizations and support networks to enhance resources and services available to children with special care needs. This may include partnerships with local support groups, therapy centers, or advocacy organizations.

9. Integrated Activities:

- Ensure that activities within the school integrate children with and without special care needs as feasible. Foster an inclusive atmosphere where all children can participate together.

10. Caregiver Adaptations:

- Ensure that caregivers adapt equipment and procedures as necessary to meet the unique needs of each child. This may involve modifying activities or varying methods to ensure that children with special needs are cared for in a natural environment as feasible.

## Conflict of Interest

The Willow School expects parents and employees to avoid activities that create a conflict of interest to the company. If you decide to arrange off-premises care with a staff member, the staff member undertakes such service on his/her own behalf- not as a staff member of The Willow School. The Willow offers no assurance of the fitness of its staff members for performing these services and none should be implied or inferred under any circumstances. The Willow School employees are prohibited from transporting children who do not belong to them, to and from the center.

## Policy Changes

In Texas, schools are required by law to have a student handbook which outlines school policies, procedures, and guidelines. The handbook is posted online at the beginning of the school year and provides important information about the school's expectations for students and parents.

If there are changes made to the school's policies, procedures, or guidelines, parents will receive immediate notification of the changes of the policies in the handbook through the Brightwheel Application.

If guardians have any questions or concerns about a policy change, they should contact The Willow School administration.



## Submission of Required Documents

Three business days prior to your child's first day of school the following forms must be completed, signed and reviewed by the administrative staff:

- Enrollment Application
- Registration
- Parent Guardian Agreement
- Parent Handbook
- Child allergy profile- Please let the administrative staff know of any allergies or special dietary requirements prior to your child's first day.
- Medical Registration Form
- Infant Profile
- Immunization Record- No child may continue enrolled in our school for more than 30 days without a current immunization report.

Families are responsible for notifying the school of any change on the enrollment form submitted. This includes but is not limited to phone numbers, emergency contacts, work locations, or a child's physician.