



# Atala Montessori

SCHOOL FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

School for Creative Expression  
PARENT HANDBOOK 2025–  
2026

## Introduction

Dear Atala Parents,

Welcome to Atala Montessori School for Creative Expression! We are delighted you have chosen to be part of our community. This Parent Handbook is designed to help you better understand the policies, procedures, and daily rhythms of our school. We believe that a strong partnership between home and school creates the foundation for a meaningful and enriching educational experience. Together, we can nurture your child's independence, creativity, and love of learning—because when parents and educators work hand in hand, anything is possible.

Cordially,

Ms. Maureen Colón, Owner & Chief Administrator ([m.colon@atalamontessori.org](mailto:m.colon@atalamontessori.org))

Ms. Maritza Castellon-Colón, Owner & Outreach Coordinator ([mcastellon@atalamontessori.org](mailto:mcastellon@atalamontessori.org))

### **Mission:**

The mission of Atala Montessori School for Creative Expression is to nurture independent, curious, and compassionate learners by honoring each child's unique voice and inspiring a lifelong love of learning through creativity and purposeful exploration.

### **Philosophy:**

At Atala Montessori School for Creative Expression, we are dedicated to unlocking the boundless potential of every child through the principles of kindness, imagination, and curiosity. By fostering a nurturing and respectful environment, we empower students to explore their unique talents and embrace their natural love for learning. Rooted in the Montessori philosophy, our approach encourages self-discovery, collaboration, and meaningful engagement. We guide children to become thoughtful, compassionate individuals with the confidence to innovate and the courage to dream — inspiring a generation of learners who will positively shape the world around them.

### **Certification and Accreditation**

All our elementary and middle school teachers hold degrees in education or related fields, and our directors are Montessori trained and certified. Atala Montessori is proudly owned and led by two passionate educators, Maureen Colón and Maritza Castellon Colón, who bring a wealth of experience in both education and the arts. As Montessori parents and educators, we've experienced the classroom from both perspectives, giving us a deep understanding of how to support each child's unique journey with empathy, insight, and care.

We are accredited by the Association of Independent Schools of Florida. We are Associate members of the American Montessori Society.

### **Admission and Enrollment Requirements**

The registration fee, materials fee, enrollment form, birth certificate, health form, and immunization records are required to complete enrollment. If your child is exempt from immunizations, a statement that meets the requirements of the Florida Minimum Standard Rules must be in our file.

A non-refundable annual \$500 Registration Fee is required of all students at the time the application or re-enrollment form is returned. Tuition is billed through “Stripe”. Arrangements can be made for single annual and biannual payments paid directly to Atala Montessori School. A late fee of \$50 will be added to your account if your payment is received late.

If a Stripe payment is declined and is past due more than two weeks, we will request a meeting between the owners and directors of Atala Montessori and the parents. After six weeks of non-payment the student will not be allowed to attend class until the account is settled.

A \$300 materials fee is required for each academic year. This fee covers all our books, workbooks, art supplies, and related costs. The fee is also used to cover the costs of two field trips per year. The fee is to be paid in one lump sum prior to the beginning of the academic year.

Your child's immunization and health record, as well as a copy of his/her birth certificate, must be maintained and current. Please submit any new shot records or health information promptly. If the immunization form is outdated, you will need to keep your child home until you are able to update it with your doctor.

Students coming from non-Montessori backgrounds are accepted. Prior to acceptance of any new student (K-8) we require a basic academic screening, two years of report cards, and two years of standardized assessments (SATs, FSA, VPK tests, or similar) from the student's previous school, and samples of current homework. In general, we are looking for students who are performing at grade level, have good conduct and effort grades, and have good attendance records.

### **Arrival and Dismissal**

All students need to arrive between **7:45 and 8:00 am, as the academic day begins promptly at 8:00 am.** The drop-off point is at the north side of our building at the “playground gate”. A teacher or assistant will greet you and your child at the car door and escort the child to his or her classroom or designated meeting spot. If you need to walk your child to class, especially in the first few days of the new year, please use the northwest parking lot.

*Please note that you will be asked to sign your child in and out each day. The assistants and teachers will have the attendance sheets on a tablet with them in the mornings and afternoons, and you will be asked to sign each time your child is dropped off or picked up from our care.*

### **Late Arrival**

At Atala Montessori School for Creative Expression, we do not accept habitual late arrivals. Promptness is a vital part of your child's educational success and overall well-being. If your child is arriving after 8:00 AM due to a documented medical reason, please bring them directly to the office through the Spider Gate (West Gate). A staff member will escort your child to class in order to minimize disruptions.

Timeliness is especially important in our elementary and middle school classrooms, where lessons are often presented in small groups and build upon one another. Frequent tardiness can cause children to miss foundational instruction, fall behind academically, and begin their day feeling rushed or unsettled.

We are preparing children not only for academic success but for life. Punctuality, responsibility, and commitment are core habits of successful individuals. Whether it's attending their future high school of choice, gaining college admission, or securing a fulfilling career, these habits begin now. Completing work carefully and arriving on time are essential life skills we expect our students to practice daily.

We take pride in the accomplishments of our graduates and often hear from former students who attribute their success to the values instilled during their time here. We ask all parents to support our mission by adhering to this policy and reinforcing the importance of punctuality at home.

### **Dismissal**

Dismissal takes place between **2:45 and 3:00 pm**. Dismissal for elementary and middle school students takes place at the playground gate. Please do not linger as our teachers and After Care staff need to maintain safety for all the children. When picking a child up early, please come to the office and we will bring your child to you. More than five early dismissals in a quarter will necessitate communication with the teacher.

Only those individuals listed on the "Permission for Pick Up" list will be allowed to take your child from campus. Please realize that we will ask for identification to ensure that your child is picked up by correct person. We will not release a child to anyone appearing to be intoxicated or impaired in any way.

**No child shall be released within the final thirty (30) minutes of the school day unless authorized through a doctor's note or emergency medical issue.** This is extremely disruptive to the flow of the day for both the classroom and the office.

A child accumulating 10 or more class unexcused absences during the school year may have quarter report cards and other academic test results withheld pending an academic screening and completion of assigned work by the classroom teacher. Excessive absences may also result in the need to repeat the grade.

As a reminder, parents need to come to the office to drop off your child late or pick up your child early. **Do not go directly to the classrooms.** The staff has all been instructed not to open their doors.

### **Before Care, After Care, and Study Hall**

Before Care is available for children arriving between 7:00–7:45 am. There is an extra charge of \$5 per morning, per child. Please bring your child in through the Spider Gate (West Gate) to meet the staff member waiting for arrivals.

After Care is available from 3:00–6:00 pm for an extra fee of \$5.00 per hour per student, with a 50% discount for all siblings. You will be billed every month at the end of each month. When you come to pick up your child, please park your car at the Spider Gate (West Gate), step out, and sign out your child with the staff on duty. Children will be available for pick up in the courtyard or in the Lower Elementary classroom.

### **Study Hall**

All students may participate in Study Hall Monday through Thursday immediately following dismissal. First and second grade students have a half-hour period in which to finish their homework. Third through eighth grade students are offered a 45-minute period to complete their classroom and homework. All students staying beyond dismissal times are automatically taken to Study Hall. The cost is \$5.00 per day and is billed every month with any additional After Care charges.

All Before and After Care and Study Hall invoices are sent during the first 3 days of the new month. You are charged for the time your child spends with us. Payments are due within 5 business days and if the payment is not received, you will receive a second invoice with a 5% late fee added. You will be required to pay that additional late fee or the payment will be returned. If after another five days the bill remains unpaid, your child will no longer be able to use these services.

**Please do not interrupt Study Hall. This is an important time when students are finishing their studies for the day. If you need to pick up your child, be sure to be here no later than 3 pm or wait until Study Hall is over (between 3:30 and 3:45 pm, depending on the age group).** If you are running late, please wait until Study Hall is over as everyone pays extra for those services and it is unfair to disrupt that quiet study time. After Study Hall, all children will be returned to the playground. At that time, we now ask that you remain outside of the "playground gate". After Care staff will call your child to retrieve their things and enter the time on the board. You are then asked to initial in your spot. Please double check the time entered and if you have any questions speak directly to the After Care staff.

### **Late Pick-Up**

If you will be late in picking up your child, please notify the office right away. There is an additional charge of \$2.00 per minute late fee if your child remains after 6:00 pm. Payment is due to Atala Montessori within 24 hours.

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### **Absences**

Students are to be counted in attendance only if they are actually present for at least two hours of the day or engaged in a school-approved educational activity which constitutes a part of the instructional program for the student.

Please notify the office if your child is going to be absent. Arrangements will be made to make up work as needed for elementary and middle school students. You will need to provide an original doctor's note or other appropriate documentation for all excused absences. This note is due the day the child returns to school. Atala staff do verify suspicious notes.

In accordance with Miami-Dade County policies, any unexcused absences over 10 days during a single academic year may necessitate summer school attendance or tutoring. In extreme cases, students may be asked to repeat a grade. Unexcused absences include:

- Vacations, personal services, local non-school event, program or sporting activity
- Older students providing day care services for siblings
- Illness of others
- Non-compliance with immunization requirements (unless lawfully exempt).

### **Homework**

Students are expected to complete required work in a timely manner. While many lessons are completed in class, there will be work that must be completed at home. Those students who consistently do not complete and turn in homework will be required to finish all assignments during summer school before they can be promoted to the next grade.

### **Dress**

All children are encouraged to wear uniform shirts Monday through Friday. While we recommend a basic khaki uniform pant, they are not required. Information on sizes, colors, and prices will be available prior to the start of school. Please label all coats, sweaters, and removable clothing with your child's name.

**Sandals, flip-flops, Crocs, and clogs** are **not** appropriate for regular school days. (Cowboy boots may be worn on special occasions.) They are not safe for physical education and running. Closed-toed, soft-soled shoes or sneakers are best for school.

### **Birthdays**

Your child's birthday is a very special time, and children enjoy celebrating their birthdays together. We welcome birthday celebrations in the class. Please let the teacher know if you plan to bring birthday treats. The only time the teacher is able to hand out invitations to private birthday parties is when there is an invitation for everyone in the class. If only some of the children in the class are invited, please mail, email the invitations or hand them out outside of school.

If you choose to send in birthday treats, please send cupcakes, cookies, or other individually portioned snacks with enough for everyone. Children at this age celebrate with their peers, so parents are urged to drop off all treats no later than 10 am in the office. Please do not send in tablecloths or decorations other than plates or napkins. Students have only 30 minutes for lunch and birthday observances before the picnic area needs to be available for the next group.

### Show and Tell

Lower Elementary students have the opportunity to participate in a show and tell day. Specific days will be assigned during the first week of classes. Each day at 8:00 am students may bring in any item of educational or personal value. Please note: if the student is not on time to class, his or her turn will be skipped until the next week.

### Personal Phone Calls and Apple Watches

In order to avoid interruptions in the classroom, we do not allow for personal phone calls between a parent and a child during school hours or in After Care. Rather, the staff can pass personal messages to your child as needed (e.g. you are running late for pick-up and your child will be going to After Care, you are having a unanticipated person pick up your child from school, or you are questioning your child if they want to stay for club or After Care free time).

### Field Trips and Extracurricular Activities

Field trips are scheduled periodically in all classrooms. Please check the online calendar for updates. Permission slips will be sent home in a timely manner. Parents must let us know if they do not want their child to participate in a field trip.

### Lunch

A nutritious lunch includes protein, cereal/grains, fruits/vegetables, and dairy. Independence is a basic principle of the Montessori environment, so please pack your child's lunch so it is easily managed. Your child should be able to open the lunch box, thermos, juice box, or water bottle, and all accompanying packaging. We do not have facilities to refrigerate or reheat lunches. Sodas, doughnuts, pop-tarts, chocolate, candy, and other high-sugar sweets are discouraged. If you forgot to send in lunch in the morning, please have it delivered to the office no later than 10:00 am.

### Friday Pizza Day

Pizza is available on most Fridays for an additional cost. Costs are variable based on the classroom. You will be notified by your classroom teacher as to the weekly cost and deadline to pay. If your child chooses not to partake of Friday's pizza lunch, please send lunch as usual. **Please note: the office does not receive pizza money. All money must be turned in directly to the teacher no later than Thursday morning at drop off. There are no exceptions.**

### Devices

Please note that if your child requests to bring a device (e.g. phone, computer, tablet, Smart Watch) from home for class work (particularly in the older grades), they bring that device at your risk. We provide a number of devices in every classroom which can also be used. At no time should children be calling or texting their parents or friends during school or after care hours. Please note that Smart Watches such as an Apple iWatch, Google Pixel Watch, etc. should not be brought to school. Please keep these items at home as they are a tremendous distraction to students.

### School Calendar and Holidays

In general, we follow the schedule of holidays of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. A list of days when the school is closed can be found on the Academic Schedule on our website. A monthly calendar is available of your child's room activities on [atalamontessori.org](http://atalamontessori.org).

Atala Montessori is not affiliated with any religious organization; however, we do recognize and celebrate major holidays. Please advise us if your child does not participate in any of these.

### Medication and Illness

If a child becomes ill with rash, fever, diarrhea, or vomiting the parent will be notified immediately by phone to pick your child up. If a child has symptoms of pink eye or lice, the parent will also be notified to pick the child up immediately. In either case, the child will not be allowed back into the classroom until all symptoms have cleared up. Please keep your child home for 24 hours until the symptoms are gone to help prevent spreading the illness to the other children. Kindly notify the school of a contagious illness.

All prescription medications must be signed in by the parent daily and left in the medication cabinet in the

office, in the original container with the child's name on it. Medicine Authorization forms must be signed by the parent or guardian for the safety of the child. Our staff is not allowed to dispense any medication with phone permission. We are not allowed to dispense any non-prescription medication and can only dispense prescription medications with the proper documentation.

If we have called to notify you that your child is sick, you must respond. If you are unable to respond immediately, we will begin calling the people on Emergency Contact list. If there is still no response or plan for pick up in place and we believe that the child is needing medical attention, we will call 911. Per DCF regulations, if a parent does not respond to this type of situation, a Medical Neglect Report will be filed. Please make sure your voicemail is not full.

### **Policy for Accidents, Incidents, or Illness**

If a child is injured or becomes ill while at school, the teacher or assistant will complete the "Incident and Illness Form" documenting the situation. If the situation is of an urgent nature, parents will be notified by phone and possibly asked to pick up their child. Parents are required to sign the report at pick up. If the child has an incident of misbehavior, parents will receive an Incident Report documenting the issue.

### **Emergency Situations**

The Atala staff is trained in CPR and First Aid. In a medical emergency, the child will receive immediate attention and then the parent will be called to pick up the child. In an extreme medical emergency, the child will receive immediate attention, 911 will be called, and then the parents will be called.

All numbers on the Emergency Contact and Medical Information Form will be called once. Per DCF regulations, if there is no response from anyone on the list, 911 will be automatically called. Therefore, it is extremely important that you answer your phones if the school calls.

If there is a request to pick up your child because of an injury or illness, you must arrange for someone from your "Permission to Pick-Up List" to pick him or her up within the hour. If your child appears to get worse or if you take longer than one hour to pick up, per DCF regulations, 911 must be called.

Parents will be notified of any situation that may have endangered their child, such as exposure to severe illness, injury (minor or major) or situations that render the school unsafe.

### **Policy for Reporting Abuse and Neglect**

All Atala Montessori School for Creative Expression staff are mandated to directly report any suspicion of child abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse, and/or exploitation of children, elderly or adults. In all cases the State of Florida law on reporting child abuse and neglect will be followed by calling the State Abuse Registry at 1-800-962-2873.

### **Emergency Numbers**

It is **imperative** that the office has current daytime numbers where a family member can be reached in the event of an emergency. If your contact number should change, please advise the office immediately in writing. Please make sure your voicemail is not full.

### **Parent Involvement**

We invite parents to volunteer at the school. Please communicate with the classroom teacher and Room Parent about various projects in which you would like to participate and to arrange specific days and times. Parent-Teacher conferences are once during the year. Additional times may be arranged by contacting the teacher directly. While we greatly appreciate our parents, we also ask that you adhere to our policies. Inappropriate behavior as deemed by the owners of Atala Montessori School may result in dismissal from the school.

### **Guidance and Discipline**

The school is interested in any information providing insight into your child's behavior, such as inability to sleep well for several consecutive nights, the birth of a sibling, stress occurring at home or in school, etc. Parents are asked to inform the teacher of such matters in person, by email, by phone, or in writing.

If possible, on the classroom and on the playground, the children are redirected before a behavioral problem develops. At Atala, we use positive discipline with children because we want to encourage children to learn responsibility and cooperation. We develop a strong connection with your child, teach with love, set clear expectations, demonstrate positive behavior, emphasize solutions, and focus on what to do to correct the situation.

Parents will be called for a conference if we have a repetitive disruptive behavior. Consistency between home and school is very important, and parents and teachers should work together to set clear limits. Consequences will be established and set in place.

### **Grievance Procedure**

We want you to be happy and comfortable with the faculty and staff at Atala Montessori. Our greatest concern is the safety, happiness, and education of your children. If you have a question or concern, please feel free to discuss the issue with your child's teacher in writing or in a conference. We are hopeful that the situation will be remedied by open communication between everyone involved. Our door is always open.

If you have a concern with an issue in the classroom, please speak to your child's teacher directly. If you do not believe the situation has been addressed, please request a meeting with the area supervisor. In extreme cases, you may wish to ask the office to coordinate a meeting with the two Atala owners.

### **Withdrawing from Atala**

We reserve the right to withdraw your child from school for consistent behavior issues, non-payment, or any of the other issues outlined in the annual Parent Handbook and Enrollment packets. Should you need to withdraw your child from Atala, the office requires an official letter in writing 2 weeks ahead of time. Upon receipt of the letter, we will return your health forms and consider options for canceling your tuition contract for the remainder of the year. Please contact the office for any questions on this policy.

### **Emergency Procedures**

Atala Montessori School will be closed if a hurricane warning is issued. If a hurricane or tornado warning is issued during school hours, we will notify you immediately of an impending early dismissal. We will follow the same actions of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. You may watch Channels 4, 6, 7, and 10 for school closing information. We will also post updates on our Facebook page. Following a hurricane, telephone communication may be interrupted. In this case, parents are urged to drive to the school and check the communication board that will be placed at the office entrance. Atala Montessori will reopen as quickly as is reasonably possible following a hurricane.

In accordance with policy, fire drills are held each month so your children will know the correct way to exit the building. All classes will meet in the west and northwest parking lots. The teachers call roll, and once given clearance, everyone will return to the classroom. We also hold intruder and weather-related drills four times per year so the children are aware of the procedures.

When the school goes on an emergency lockdown, we do not allow anyone to enter to exit the premises. You will be alerted by email and then receive updates as we are able. Once we receive the all-clear, we will send another email updating everyone. Please do not attempt to pick-up your child. We will not release them until we are all in a safe situation.

### **Physical Education, Music, Spanish, and Art Instruction**

While many of our classes will incorporate aspects of movement, drama, singing, and visual art, we also offer dedicated periods of study during the class day and in after school activities.

#### **Physical Education**

Students in kindergarten through eighth grades enjoy outdoor playtime several times a week. Students are asked to bring reusable water bottles for outside activity.

**Please note:** Middle School students may be required to wear a uniform shirt, shorts (not jeans), socks, and sneakers on PE days. They will need to bring an extra shirt to change into after PE (a full clothing is not necessary, but if you prefer sending in a complete change, that is your choice). Also, everyone must have a water bottle. Anyone who does not have a water bottle cannot participate in PE and will not receive a grade for that day.

### **Updates to Contact Information**

If your telephone number, email address, or any other contact information has changed, please visit the office to update your child's information sheet. Once updated, we will ensure that all relevant classrooms and aftercare staff receive the new details.

Please remember to check our website ([atalamontessori.org](http://atalamontessori.org)) for updates on the school and our events. Each class maintains its own page with an activity calendar and reminders from the teachers. We notify parents through hard copy letters and email. You may also wish to join us on Facebook and Instagram for updates on the activities at school. You are invited to contact the school at 786-738-1210 / 786-494-6477 (call or text) or by email at [information@atalamontessori.org](mailto:information@atalamontessori.org) for any questions or concerns.

### **Parent Code of Conduct**

We teach our children to be considerate of others and work out disagreements in a respectful manner. We expect our parents to act in the same way and treat our staff, volunteers, and other children with respect at all times. We ask that you take the time to read through our Parent Code of Conduct and use it as a way of handling possible conflicts with others at Atala.

1. Parents and other guardians are expected to follow the school rules of Atala Montessori and treat the staff, volunteers, and children with respect.
2. Parents who have any concerns about specific children, teachers, administrators, club directors, volunteers, or other staff members are expected to direct their concerns and comments to the classroom teacher first and then an owner. Many of our staff members are not full-time employees so we ask that you begin a conversation with the classroom teacher or administrator when conflicts arise.
3. A parent or guardian who verbally mistreats another child or adult at the school will be asked to leave right away. Depending on the severity of the issue, their child may also be removed from the school for the remainder of the year.
4. If necessary and only in extreme circumstances, the police will be called to remove any parent or guardian who gets out of control verbally or physically with another person at Atala Montessori School.

**Please sign and return to the office.**

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\_\_\_\_\_ (please initial) I have read the guidelines of the Parent Code of Conduct Policy.

Student Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

I have received, read, and understand the content of the Atala Parent Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date