



FAMILY HANDBOOK

2024 - 2025

School Contact Information

School Website: www.AtlanticMontessoriCharter.com

Pines Campus: 754-263-2700

General School Email: info@amcharterschool.com

Mrs. Ocejo (Executive Director)
jocejo@amcharterschool.com

Dr Monica Duenas (Hernandez)
(Administrator)
mduenas@amcharterschool.com

Ms. Rodriguez (Administrator) mrodriguez@amcharterschool.com

ESE Specialist esespecialist@amcharterschool.com

ESOL Specialist esolspecialist@amcharterschool.com

Mission

Atlantic Montessori Charter School's mission is to provide quality instruction which holds a strong commitment to the founding principles and philosophies of Montessori education and inspires academic excellence in an environment rich with warmth, kindness, and respect, nurturing curiosity, creativity and independence.

Four core principles form the foundation for Atlantic Montessori Charter School:

- Fostering academic success by providing a safe and nurturing school environment designed for experiential learning that stimulates the child's natural curiosity.
- Developing a strongly held set of universal values, which include self-respect, respect for others, honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy, compassion, kindness, peacefulness, and civic responsibility.
- Creating a sense of global awareness and environmental responsibility.
- Guiding children to become independent critical thinkers and self-motivated lifelong learners.

Curriculum

The Montessori approach to learning is embedded in the framework of Atlantic Montessori Charter School's educational program. Atlantic Montessori Charter School is designed to prepare children both for higher education, and for life.

Montessori lessons and materials are used as a vehicle to rigorously address, in a balanced and parallel form, the following:

- Montessori Curriculum
- Florida's BEST Standards
- Florida's Standards

Atlantic Montessori Charter School Offers

- A safe child-centered environment with two adults to every class.
- Teachers and staff have been selected, not only for their academic credentials, but also because of their caring and nurturing dispositions.
- Trained Montessori teachers who vow to deliver high academic standards and to continue to enhance their professional growth.
- Parents are offered the opportunity to take an active role in their child's education.
- Non-competitive, non-threatening atmosphere for your child's learning.
- Small school community atmosphere
- Open door policy to discuss any concerns may have about their child's education.
- ESE Specialist
- ESOL Specialist
- After school enrichment programs

The Montessori Philosophy

Current research in education and psychology is now recognizing what Dr. Maria Montessori first observed in 1907: Education begins at birth. A young child is far more capable than we generally think. Children learn more through observation and activities when they are engaged using concrete materials rather than through traditional methods of instruction. Children have within them, the potential of what they are to become. Through sensitive guidance, in an environment appropriate for each stage of development, the children fulfill their innate need to teach themselves and learn from their peers and teachers, so that they may develop physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually, in a most natural manner.

The Montessori Goals

- To assist each child in the task of self-development and self-discovery
- To provide an environment where each child develops skills and attitudes that are age appropriate
- To develop a foundation for a lifetime of learning
- To create an environment which fosters self-confidence, harmony with peers, respect for others, and develops practices to care for his/her environment
- To nurture in each child, a zeal for learning and a zest for life

What is a Charter School?

Charter schools are public schools that are under a performance contract. A charter school must be able to demonstrate that the children are learning.

Charter schools are:

- Charter schools are largely free to innovate, and often provide more effective programs and choice to diverse groups of students.
- Held strictly accountable for academic outcomes and financial solvency.

In other words, a charter school is an "independent public school".

Atlantic Montessori Charter School Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for setting policies that support the overall vision and longevity of the school. Any grievances should be reported to our Charter School Liaison, Juana Ocejo at liaison@amcharterschool.com for the East Campus and West Campus.

Schedule

Atlantic Montessori Charter School will follow the same yearly schedule as Broward County Public Schools.

School Hours

K - 3rd Grade - 8:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

Before School Care:

7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. (see registration forms for fee)

Office Hours - 8:00 a.m. to 3:30p.m.

Children not participating in our Before School Care program should arrive no earlier than 8:00 a.m.

Dismissal:

K-3rd Grade - 2:45pm

After Care:

3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. (see registration forms for fee)

Arrival and Dismissal

Teachers will be opening their doors at 8:00 a.m. Your child should arrive at school between 8:00 a.m. and 8:25 a.m. Instruction begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. A child who is not in his/her classroom by 8:30 a.m. is considered tardy.

We ask your cooperation in assisting your child in getting to school on time. Those arriving late will receive a late pass from the office. Tardy arrivals become a part of a child's permanent record.

Children, who are tardy more than four times during a grading period, will receive a notice from the school. A parent conference will be required if your child is excessively tardy. Please help us to curtail tardiness. Research indicates a direct correlation between tardiness/absences and learning gains.

While on school grounds, parents are required to follow instructions directed by the administrator or staff on duty.

Children need to be picked up by their parents on time. There is no adult supervision after dismissal, unless children are enrolled in the after-school care program.

If you must pick up your child early, it must be done before 2:30 p.m. Please come to the office, sign him/her out, and the office personnel will call your child to meet you. Please, remember that taking your child out of school early means that instruction in subject areas will be missed. Kindly try to make appointments after 3:00 p.m.

Attendance

There is probably no factor more important to successful school progress than regular attendance. Children who are absent excessively from the instructional program will fall behind in academic achievement. Excessive school absenteeism may result in failure to achieve, loss of interest and may affect your child's promotion to the next higher-grade level. When your child is absent, please send in a written notice regarding the absence. Making a call to school and informing the school of your child's absence/tardy does not substitute the written notice. Accurate attendance records will be backed by your written notices.

Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed below (F.S. 1003.24(4), 1003.26):

- Illness of student.
- Illness of an immediate family member.
- Death in the family.
- Religious holidays of the student's own faith.
- Required court appearance or subpoena.
- Special event. Examples of special events include important public functions, conferences, state/national competitions, as well as exceptional cases of family need. The student must get permission from the Director/designee at least five days ahead of time.
- Scheduled medical or dental appointment.
- Students having, or suspected of having, a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted, are to be excluded from school and are not allowed to return to school until they no longer present a health hazard (F.S. 1003.22).

Examples of communicable diseases and infestations include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, and scabies.

Children are allowed a maximum of five excused absences for each infestation of head lice. Parents must submit a note to the school stating the reason child was out, no later than 72 hours after absence. Excuses must be in writing.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences not excused as defined in the previous section, are considered unexcused without a note.

- Children without a completed Certificate of Immunization indicating compliance with the current required schedule of immunizations will not be allowed to attend classes until this document is provided or a waiver is obtained. Absences due to non-compliance with immunization requirements shall be considered unexcused. (F.S. 1003.22(1))
- For students transferring into Broward County, including but not limited to foster care students, or homeless students, a temporary 30-day waiver of both health examination documents and certificates of immunization must be granted. (F.S. 1003.22(1) (5) (e))

Parents of students who accumulate five unexcused absences from school must meet with the school's director and create a plan to improve the child's attendance pattern (RTI).

Lunch Program

We are currently using a food service provider approved by the National School Lunch Program. The cost for lunch is \$4.50 daily and must be preordered. If we have extra lunches and you order lunch the day of, the cost is \$5.00. This does not guarantee that we will have extra lunches (as they are preordered). Please do not send your child to school without lunch. If your child does not bring lunch, you will be called to bring them lunch.

Lunches served in our school are appetizing and nutritious. If your child brings lunch, please do not send candy, gum, or soda pop. These items are not allowed in school. We discourage parents from bringing in lunches from fast food restaurants. We strongly urge you to not send peanuts or peanut derivatives as we have students with allergies.

We accept monthly payments for lunch. All lunch orders are due by the previous **Thursday**.

Dining manners and good habits are a part of our school instructional program, we reserve the right to remove or suspend any child from the eating area who creates unnecessary disturbances.

Children are expected to stay in their seats until they are dismissed, refrain from playing with food, talk in moderate tones, and clean up the area around their table.

Popsicles will be sold each Wednesday for \$1.00 (cash only). Must be prepaid.

After School Child Care

After school care will be provided for those students registered in the after-school care program. Annual registration fee for before and/or after care is \$40 for the school year. Payments must be done by the noted due dates. The fees are listed on the Before School and After School Care Agreement Form. If you will be using our Drop-in After care service (3:00pm - 6:00pm) it is \$40 for the day (3:00pm-6:00pm) if your child is registered. If they are not registered it is a \$25 per hour fee. Registered students early release days rate is \$60.00.

Overdue payments will be cause for discontinuation of aftercare services. Unused services will not be refunded.

Dress Code

Students are expected to practice health hygiene habits regarding personal cleanliness, grooming, and neatness of dress. Students who fail to meet the dress code, shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures.

The dress code is as follows: Students are required to wear navy slacks/pants/skirts/shorts/pedal pushers and official school polo with logo. No jeans. Shirts must be tucked in or extended at least six (6) inches below the waist. Students must wear pants that fit appropriately at the waist, with no underwear/boxers showing. Whenever pants are loose fitting at the waist, belts must be worn with shirts tucked in. If a skirt is worn it must be no shorter than four inches above the knee and no longer than ankle length. Whenever loose-fitting shorts or skirt is worn (at the waist), belts must be worn with shirt tucked in. Sweaters and jackets should be labeled with child's name. Closed toe shoes and socks are required.

Exceptions to the dress code shall be permitted when:

A student's parent requests a reasonable accommodation to address the student's disability or medical condition. Such request shall be provided in writing and submitted to the principal for approval

Or

The wearing of clothing in compliance with the uniform dress code violates a student's sincerely held religious belief. Such students and the student's parents shall submit a signed affidavit setting forth the religious issues and the requested exemption to the policy.

Dress Code Correction Action:

First Offense: Student will receive a warning document to take home.

Second Offense: Student will receive a warning document to take home.

Students not wearing the appropriate uniform top will be issued a new one and the parent will incur the cost of the uniform top.

Third Offense: Will be considered a breach of Charter School Contract.

The following attire is not to be worn or brought to school:

- Slippers, open-toe shoes/sandals, or shoes with metal cleats
- Garments made of sheer, revealing, tight, and/or see-through fabrics
- Undershirts, tank tops or shirts with spaghetti straps as an outer garment
- Garments with designs that reflect drugs, gangs, alcohol, sexual messages, tobacco, profanity, racial or ethnic slurs, or violence/guns.
- Jeans are not part of the school uniform.
- No dangling jewelry.

Bookbags

Only see-through bookbags are allowed on campus.

Homework

Homework provides an opportunity for remedial drill, practice, enrichment activities, and the development of study skills and self-discipline. In addition to routine homework assignments students will also be engaged in project-based learning activities.

Grading

Our school will be using the traditional report card system for kindergarten through fifth grade.

Testing

All students will be tested at the beginning of the school year using both formal and informal diagnostic assessments. The school will participate in all state mandated testing. All standardized testing results will be issued to the parent by the school.

Physical Education

The physical education program will take place each day as mandated by Florida State Law.

Field Trips

Field trips are formal educational experiences planned for students to enrich their knowledge of the subject at hand.

Chaperones are recruited in a systematic manner to assist in providing structured and safe supervision. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to volunteer to chaperone, if needed. For safety reasons, kindly support this procedure according to Broward County Public Schools. Siblings not attending the school will **not** be permitted on field trips.

Written parent permission must be given for a child to participate in field trips. Field trip forms will be sent home in your child's planner. Money and permission slips must be returned no later than one week prior to the field trip, or the student will not be permitted to go. Students not adhering to the behavior standards will not be allowed to attend.

Yearbook

The school will also have a yearbook documenting all the school year events. This yearbook will be on sale during the spring semester.

Communication

A monthly calendar will be sent home with each student in the communication folder. This calendar will be posted on the bulletin board near the main office and on the school's website.

Regular announcements, updates, scheduled events, emergency school situations, etc., may be communicated to the parents via the following:

Flyer in your child's take-home folder

Text message from the school (must maintain accurate phone info)

Emails from the school

Phone call from AMCS

Student Birthdays

The school will celebrate students' birthday at the discretion of each classroom teacher. Celebrations will take place at the end of the day. These celebrations will be linked to a science and a mathematics lesson. Details will follow in school newsletter. All food items shared at school events must be store bought and not home-made, to avoid health related concerns. Please discuss details with your child's teacher.

Things to Leave at Home

- All pets, except by the invitation of the teacher. Please, keep in mind that animals in the classroom are potentially dangerous.
- Knives and other sharp objects, guns (including toy guns), bullets, baseballs, bats, etc. All these items can be hazardous to boys and girls and cannot be brought to school.
- Money in large amounts. Please, send only the money a child needs for the day, if any. The school cannot be held responsible for any loss of monies or valuables.
- Heirlooms, valuable jewelry, and other irreplaceable articles should be kept at a minimum. Dangling earrings should be left at home due to safety reasons.
- Baseball cards, playing cards or Pokémon, etc.
- Skateboards
- Toys, CDs, radios, and other electronic devices.
- Gum and candy

Illness and Injury

If a child is injured or ill at school, we will do everything possible to make him/her comfortable and administer first aid as needed. You will be called immediately. If you cannot be contacted, we will telephone the emergency contact person(s) listed on your child's emergency contact card. **Please make sure all the information on the emergency contact card is current and accurate. In the event of a life threatening emergency, the school will call for emergency medical care as deemed necessary. Emergency transportation to a hospital as determined by paramedics will be authorized.** Facilities for emergency care in school are very limited. We appreciate you make arrangements to take your child home promptly for adequate care. The importance of regular attendance cannot be overemphasized, but your child should not be sent to school when he/she has a communicable disease or cold, runny nose, coughing or temperature. In the event of an illness, please keep your child home from school to fully recover, for his/her own sake, and that of others.

Medication

School personnel is not permitted to administer or dispense medication to any student without complying with Broward County Public Schools Department of Health Procedures.

Any child who must take medication at school must have a written treatment plan signed by a licensed physician and a consent form signed by the parent or guardian. The office must have these documents, not the teacher. This applies to all medicine. Under no circumstances, will any child be in possession of medication of any type, including cough drops.

Student Behavior

Atlantic Montessori Charter School students and staff will follow the Code of Student Conduct as established by the Broward County Public Schools

Students are expected to show respect for themselves, for other students, and to all adults. We encourage our staff to use positive reinforcement for good behavior. There will be ongoing documentation of your child's conduct and academic progress.

Students and parents are required to adhere to a contract. Failure to do so will result in the consequences set forth by the school policy.

The following **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED** at our school:

- Disrespect to adults (teachers, aides, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, volunteers, clerical staff, administrators, or parents).
- Fighting
- Anything that can be used as a weapon. Broward County Public Schools has a zero-tolerance policy regarding weapons. This policy is strictly enforced.
- Language which threatens, intimidates, harasses or insults
- Profane language or gestures.
- Substances harmful to health
- Damaging or destroying property
- All types of bullying; verbal, physical, cyber, etc.

Conferences

We appreciate the keen interest you show in the progress of your children. If you wish to arrange a conference with your child's teacher, please send a note to the teacher using your child's planner. Teachers should receive a note with ample time to respond and confirm the appointment or offer an alternative date and time. Please refrain from engaging in parent-teacher conferences during arrival and dismissal times.

It is mandatory that you attend at least two parent conferences per year, the first must occur before the month of November. Failure to do so will result in a breach of contract.

We will schedule several Parent workshops during the school year. During our first Open House meeting, we will explain the curriculum, schedule, homework, and other aspects of the academic program. Subsequent Open House meetings will give you the opportunity to observe your child doing his/her favorite Montessori lessons and students will have an opportunity to participate in a school wide exposition of some kind.

Family Rights and Privacy Act

The revised Family Rights and Privacy Act became a Federal Law in November 1974. The intent of this law is to protect the accuracy and privacy of student educational records.

Without your consent, only you and authorized individuals having legitimate educational interests will have access to your child's educational records. You may make an appointment to inspect and review your child's records by calling the school.

Please do not post pictures or videos on any form of social media without the expressed written consent of Atlantic Montessori Charter School, INC

Volunteering and Committees

Volunteers are an important part of the educational program. They assist teachers working with students in many ways. Parents are required to devote a minimum of 30 volunteer hours per child per year. It is your responsibility to complete and record your volunteer hours. Failure to do this will result in a breach of contract. The following committees have been set up to ensure this takes place:

- a. Literacy
- b. Yearbook/Newsletter
- c. Fundraising - School Year (on going school events)
- d. Fundraising - Major (grants)
- e. Playground Approval
- f. Community Involvement
- g. School Beautification
- h. Extracurricular Activities
 - i. Cooking/Drama
 - ii. School Field trips
 - iii. Arts and Crafts
- i. Public Relations/Media
- j. Hospitality
- k. Room Parents
- l. Multicultural Fair
- m. Family Picnic

Please see the main office or your child's teacher to find out how you can become involved. We welcome volunteers but not in your child's classroom during the school day as this may cause disruption in the academic flow. Room parents are welcomed to work collaboratively with teachers, before or after school.

Please turn in your volunteer hours quarterly. The volunteer log is in the front office.

Telephone/Electronic Devices

Children may not use the telephone except for emergencies. It is not appropriate for children to bring cellphones and/or electronic devices to school. We are not responsible for any lost or stolen cellphones/electronics. *Please see administration if you have any questions regarding this.

It is most difficult to accept messages for individual children without interrupting the instructional activities of an entire class. **We cannot deliver messages to an individual child.**

Emergency Procedures

Our school has safety procedures in place to protect your child. While on campus all visitors are required to follow all instructions provided by our school administrators. In the event of a lock down, no one will be able to enter or exit the campus until an all clear has been issued.

Smoking on School Grounds

Atlantic Montessori Charter School is a smoke-free school.

Smoking is not allowed on school property.

Lost and Found

Please be sure to mark your child's name on all belongings, such as sweaters, raincoats, lunch boxes, book bags, etc. Articles that are lost and unclaimed are kept in the office for a period of one week. Please, claim lost articles in the office; otherwise, these articles will be donated.

Parent-Teacher Organization

The PTO Board will meet monthly. PTO members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Each year the PTO plans varied activities to draw the home and school closer together.

The PTO also sponsors activities that raise funds for special school projects. All classes have parent room representatives who serve as liaison persons between the classroom and PTO, and who support class activities. We encourage you to become an active participant.

Visitors

For the safety and protection of all boys and girls, all visitors, including parents, must always stop in the office for clearance before proceeding to the classroom. There will be a log where you must sign in and out.

Estranged Parents and Guardians

For the safety of our students please advise and provide legal documentation to the school authorities of which party has legal access to the child and his/her records during school hours. In the absence of specific directions, school officials will respond to those names and relationships that appear on the current records. Friends and strangers will be denied access to a student in the absence of verified parental consent.

Transfers

If it is necessary to withdraw a child from school, the school should be notified at least two working days prior to the withdrawal date. A student wishing to transfer from one school to another within the county shall secure the transfer from the sending school before registering at the new school.

Return check policy

To avoid an excessive fee associated with returned checks, any returned checks will incur a \$40.00 fee in addition to a \$35.00 late fee for aftercare/before school care. After a bounced check, the party will no longer be able to make payments with a check. Instead, credit card or a money order will be the only accepted form of payment. This will go into effect beginning the first week of school.

ATLANTIC MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL GOVERNING BOARD MEETINGS

The Governing Board will meet in accordance with Section 286.011, Florida Statute. These meetings are open to the public.

The meetings will be held at:

Atlantic Montessori Charter School

The meeting time and dates will be posted on our website and on the monthly calendar posted on our bulletin board.

Everyone is welcome to attend Governing Board Meetings. To sign up to speak at a meeting please see Mrs. Arias-Gonzalez prior to the meeting to add your name to the agenda.

Governing Board

Aurora Vales

Kisha McLean

Ricardo Carrera

Parent Liaison

East Campus - Juana Ocejo: Liaison@amcharterschool.com or (954) 790-8943

West Campus - Juana Ocejo: Liaison@amcharterschool.com or (954) 790-8943

The Governing Board at Atlantic Montessori Charter School is composed of teachers, parents, and other citizens in our community

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 286.011, FLORIDA STATUTE
THESE MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

This handbook was approved at the July 26, 2024 Atlantic Montessori Charter School's Governing Board meeting.

***Aurora Vales*, Board President 7/26/2024**