



PETITE ÉCOLE INTERNATIONALE

# Parent Handbook

Petite École Internationale is committed to supporting and fostering a diverse community of staff and students.

Petite École Internationale does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational, admissions, or tuition assistance policies or programs.

831 Springdale Rd.  
Austin, TX 78702  
Phone: 512-302-3180  
[petiteecole.com](http://petiteecole.com)

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
Brief History	4
About Montessori	4
Mission	5
Philosophy	5
School Organization	5
State of Texas Regulation	5
<b>School Operations</b>	<b>6</b>
Hours of Operation	6
Class Schedule	6
Summer Program	7
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>7</b>
Tuition and Fees for the 2023-2024 School Year	7
Termination/Withdrawal	8
Enrollment and Immunization Record Requirements	9
<b>Daily Schedule</b>	<b>9</b>
Drop-off/Pick-up	9
Late Pick-up Policy	10
Child Release	10
<b>Health Policies</b>	<b>10</b>
Meals	11
Food Allergies	11
Sick Policy	12
Medicine	12
Nursing Mothers	12
Clothing Requirements	12
Daily Physical Activity	13
Insect Spray/Sunscreen for Recess	13
Toilet Training	13
Accidents/Emergency	14
Developmental/Behavioral Issues:	14
<b>Special Procedures</b>	<b>15</b>
Communication	15
Enrollment Form Updates	16

Inclement Weather	16
Emergency evacuation	16
Field Trips	16
Birthdays	17
Toys	17
Babysitting	18
Graduation	18
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	<b>19</b>
Transition from Home to School	19
Attendance	19
Parent-Teacher Conferences	20
Assessments	20
Observations	20
Parent Participation	21
Volunteer Requirements	21
HHS/DFPS	22
<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>25</b>
School Staff	25
Board Members	26
<b>Appendix II</b>	<b>26</b>
Community Resources	26
<b>Parent's Agreement</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Emergency Evacuation Plan</b>	<b>31</b>

# Introduction

## **Welcome!**

We are delighted that you and your child are going to be part of the PEI family! The purpose of this handbook is to provide an outline of the school's policies and operational information, as well as brief information about the school, which will help you and your child have a happy and positive experience with us. Although fairly comprehensive, this handbook may not include everything that might be of interest, which is why parents are invited to share their questions or concerns with their child's teacher, or any member of the Board.

## **Brief History**

Petite Ecole Internationale (PEI) opened its door in 2000. Initially a bilingual school, the program changed to a full immersion one the following year. After the original owner of the school made a decision to close it due to difficulties balancing family life with the responsibilities of owning a school, the parents of PEI got together and decided to buy the school. In May 2006, PEI became a non-profit with strong parental involvement, a renewed commitment to Montessori and stronger bonds between the families.

## **About Montessori**

Montessori is a comprehensive educational approach from birth to adulthood based on the observation of children's needs in a variety of cultures all around the world.

Beginning her work almost a century ago, Dr. Maria Montessori developed this educational approach based on her understanding of children's natural learning tendencies as they unfold in "prepared environments" for multi-age groups.

The Montessori environment contains specially designed, manipulative "materials for development" that invite children to engage in learning activities of their own individual choice. Children in a Montessori classroom learn by making discoveries with the materials while cultivating concentration, motivation, self-discipline and a love of learning.

## **Mission**

Petite Ecole Internationale is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing a quality French immersion Montessori education for children ages 2-5 and to promote the benefits of language acquisition.

## **Philosophy**

We believe that learning a second language at an early age has far-reaching benefits including proven higher testing scores both in verbal and math, overall better problem-solving skills, and stronger linguistic skills. Coupled with a strong Montessori program that respects each child's learning preferences, personal growth, tastes and culture, this special program provides a unique enriching environment with high-quality education.

## **School Organization**

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the school and is responsible for policymaking and conducting the routine business of the school. The Director serves in both administrative and advisory capacities.

The structure of the school allows parents to be involved and communicate their concerns through the School Teachers/Director, Board Members and their own volunteer services. Parents play a large role in the school by being Board members, Committee chairs or members and/or working the required 10 hours a year as volunteers.

## **State of Texas Regulation**

As a registered child care facility, the operations of Petite Ecole are governed by the State department of Health and Human Services/ Department of Family and Protective Services.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child\\_care/](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/)

## **Annual policies**

PEI's operating policies, including the parent handbook, are reviewed annually and updated if necessary to address in changes in our procedures.

# School Operations

## Hours of Operation

PEI follows the Austin Independent School District (AISD) school year. As is our policy, we are closed during their in-service days, scheduled vacations/holidays, and for delays/closings during inclement weather. Hours of operations are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays and specified vacation/in-service days). A school calendar with all the planned events and closings will be provided at the beginning of the school year. We do not offer a reduction in tuition due to any school closures, holidays, or vacation periods.

The school day is from 8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Extended day is from 2:45 p.m. until 5:30 p.m.

## Class Schedule

Morning drop-off is from 8:00-8:30 am. We encourage you to arrive on time to avoid disrupting the classroom. It is very frustrating and discouraging to see children who are just beginning to focus on an activity or lesson to be distracted by the late arrival of a friend. By bringing your child on time, you give him/her:

- Time for a relaxed separation
- Time to socialize before engaging in work
- The opportunity to have the teacher's undivided attention for individual lessons
- Good habits that will be already in place when your child is ready to start elementary school

The morning portion of the program allows for a free choice Montessori work period with access to science/culture/practical life/sensorial/and art, the lesson of the day, a snack and group time. The PEI academic curriculum includes pre-writing exercises, math, and language acquisition based on students' readiness, initiation and mastery.

Lunch starts at 11:30 a.m., and the children nap from approximately 12:45 to 2:15 p.m. If your child shows signs of fatigue earlier than 12:45, the teacher will accommodate your child's needs. Per DFPS standards, a 30-minute rest period is required of all students, regardless of their napping

habits. After 40 minutes of quiet time, children who do not nap or take shorter naps are permitted to quietly look at books.

The school day ends at 2:45 p.m. The children will be brought out through the front door for pick up. If possible, please wait until they are brought outside so that your child can finish any activity and participate in the closing day song.

In addition to our full school-day educational program we offer two part time program options. One option is to attend 5 days a week from 8:00-12:00 with pick up occurring after lunch and before our daily story and naptime. The other part time option is a 3 day a week program from 8:00-2:45 pm.

### **Summer Program**

Our summer program operates during the months of June and July and follows the same operating hours as the school year day. While the main focus of our school program is language acquisition based on an academic curriculum, our summer program's purpose is language acquisition in a more relaxed atmosphere.

During this time, cultural activities and arts and crafts are predominant in the classroom, though academics are still offered to allow new students to acquire basic concepts and to reinforce concepts for returning students. The summer program may include water activities, such as sprinklers, that will require your permission before your child can participate. At this time, we do not use wading pools or other water bodies requiring extra supervision.

## **Enrollment**

### **Tuition and Fees for the 2024-2025 School Year**

#### **New Student Fees:**

Wait list fee (if applicable): \$100

The Wait List Fee is paid to become a prospective family. The Enrollment/Registration and Supply Fee is to hold a space open for your child for the incoming year and are annual fees. These fees are non-refundable should you cancel your enrollment.

## Student Fees:

<b>Registration/Supply Fee</b>	\$600 per year
<b>New family One time facilities fee</b>	\$150
<b>Part Time Program Yearly Tuition</b>	\$10,500 per year / \$1050 per month (10-month payment plan)
<b>Pre-Primary Yearly Tuition, 2-year-olds</b>	\$13,250 per year / \$1,325 per month (10-month payment plan)
<b>Primary Yearly Tuition, 3 years and up</b>	\$12,000 per year / \$1,200 per month (10-month payment plan)

The first-month tuition, registration and supply fee are due by the first day of the start date. The registration and supply fee are non-refundable should you decide to cancel enrollment. PEI requires 30 days written notice of the parent's intent to withdraw a child. Parents shall be responsible for the following month's tuition in full should they fail to comply with the above notice requirements.

## Extended Day (2:45 to 5:30 p.m.)

<b>Monthly Fee (must be registered)</b>	\$325 per month
<b>Drop-in fee (based on availability)</b>	\$35 per day

The yearly tuition is payable in advance but due no later than on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. You have the option to pay tuition monthly, payable in advance but no later than the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. Tuition can be paid by check or cash. Online payments are also available but are subject to a 4% transaction fee, which will be added to your monthly tuition. Any payment made after the 5<sup>th</sup> will be assessed a \$25 late fee plus \$5 per additional subsequent day. A \$25 penalty fee will apply for returned checks. Returned checks not paid by the fifth business day after we notify you of the return will result in termination of services.

We understand that PEI serves families from all over the world who travel regularly over extensive periods of time. However, your tuition is a guaranteed rate and continues to be due in full each month in order to maintain your child's enrollment.

## Termination/Withdrawal

A one-month (30 days) advance notice, in writing, no later than the 5<sup>th</sup> of



the month, is required if you choose to withdrawal your child from the school. Except in the case of gross misconduct on the part of either parent or student, PEI will provide a two week notice before removing a student. If the family withdraws their child without a 30-day written notice, they will be charged for the full month's tuition (if not paying annually or by the semester). No refunds will be given.

### **Enrollment and Immunization Record Requirements**

Before we can accept your child into our program, HHS/DFPS requires that all registration forms be duly filled and filed at the school. These include the:

- Enrollment form
- Child release form: please make sure to include your spouse.
- Emergency form: a physical address needs to be on record in case of emergency. "The closest hospital" does not qualify as a valid address.
- Immunization record and a physician's statement.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of our center's policies and discipline practices. Should any change occur, it is the parents' responsibility to notify the school and update the information. It is important that we be able to reach you when necessary.

Please make sure the varicella vaccine and Prevnar are indicated. If your child does not have the proper immunization due to conflicts with the tenets of your religion or personal beliefs, you will need to request an exemption form with the Texas Health Department. All requests will need to be addressed in person or in writing. For more information, you can go to: [http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/school\\_exclusion.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/school_exclusion.shtm). For children age 4 and older, a copy of a hearing and vision screening must also be kept on file.

**All health immunization information has to be in your child's file upon admission into our program (Standard 746.611-613). The physician statement can be provided no later than a week after admission.**

## Daily Schedule

### **Drop-off/Pick-up**

Morning drop-off occurs at the front door. We have found that having the

child walk in on their own reduces separation anxiety and trauma for both the child and the parent. When you arrive in the morning, please knock on the door and a staff member will let your child into the building. Upon entry, children's temperatures will be checked and if they are running a fever of 100 degrees or higher, they will need to return home. Children will immediately wash their hands in the entry foyer bathroom and change into their "inside shoes" before entering the classroom to put away their morning snack and lunchboxes.

Dismissal is held outside the front door. A staff member will permit your child to leave the wait area only when you (or a designated person – see Child Release below) arrive. Once your child leaves the porch area, you are responsible for your child's safety even if you and your child choose to remain on school property for some period of time. Please keep in mind that cars will be pulling into and out of the driveway and that the front area along the street is not fenced.

### **Late Pick-up Policy**

A flat fee of \$10.00 plus an additional \$5.00 per minute will be assessed for late pick-ups. A late pick-up is any time after 3:00 p.m. for children enrolled only for the regular school day and after 5:30 p.m. for children enrolled in extended day. A total of ten minutes per semester will be allowed for late pick-ups before late fees apply.

### **Child Release**

PEI staff will not release a child without verbal or written consent to anyone other than the persons listed on the *Child Release Form*, including a spouse. Please inform the person(s) picking up your child to be prepared to show proper identification. A copy of their ID will be made for your child's file. Please email the Director with written consent to update your child's release authorization information on the enrollment form. We must have a valid address and phone number for any person who is not a parent/guardian.

## **Health Policies**

The following policies have been established to optimize your child's well-being during his/her stay at the school. We also want you to be able to understand how we work and why so that you can be an active partner in your child's day even if you are not physically present.

## **Meals**

PEI does not provide meals or snacks. Each child should bring a healthy, well-balanced lunch and one healthy snack each day. Children enrolled in extended day should bring an additional healthy snack for the afternoon. We will on occasion, conduct cooking activities with the children to emphasize cultural celebrations. Parents will receive advanced notice of any activities that involve food or drinks provided by the school via email to ensure no allergy restrictions or food preference (vegan, gluten free, etc.) issues. With any cooking activity, we will ensure safe meal practices (including but not limited to, liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F being kept out of the reach of children).

A small refrigerator is available for use by the children, but for day-to-day lunches and snacks, please supply an ice pack to maintain proper temperatures for perishable food.

Health and Human Services/ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (HHS/DFPS) requires that student nutritional needs be met during the school day. Consequently, children may not bring any candy or other junk food to school. We ask that each day you provide at least one serving of fruit, one serving of vegetables, one serving of carbohydrates and one serving of protein. Parents should work with their child's teacher to improve the quality of meals and snacks when requested by the teacher. PEI cannot be held responsible for the nutritional value of meals provided by parents or for meeting the child's daily food needs.

Children are not forced to eat. Instead, we encourage them to try new foods and teachers model healthy habits. Whatever your child doesn't eat will be sent back home whenever possible so that you can stay informed about your child's diet and eating habits.

## **Food Allergies**

Please notify the Director if your child has any food allergies, restrictions, or procedures that we need to be aware of for safety. All staff members receive annual training on food allergies in order to be aware of all precautions. We will require a Food Allergy Emergency Plan be submitted if your child has a diagnosed food allergy.

For additional food nutrition or food allergy information, please see our community resource page at the back of the handbook.

## **Sick Policy**

In accordance with the DFPS Minimum Standards for child care facilities, PEI will not accept any child who is running a fever of 100 degrees or more, is vomiting or has diarrhea. If your child should become ill while at the school, you will be contacted and required to come pick him/her up. If your child is not running a fever but is very uncomfortable and requiring extra attention, consider keeping your child home.

In the event of an outbreak of a communicable disease, PEI will notify the parents in compliance with 746.307 (c) of the DFPS Minimum Standards and will explain when the child may return to the school.

## **Medicine**

When necessary and with your permission, PEI staff can administer medicine to your child. The medicine must be in its original container and accompanied by a prescription or written instructions indicating the frequency and amount to be administered. Medicine is administered once a day, at lunchtime, unless otherwise indicated by the prescription. All medicines are kept in the office or in the refrigerator, in a locked container, out of reach of the children.

If you need PEI staff to administer medicine to your child, please request an authorization form from the staff. PEI must have and maintain an authorization form in order to administer medicine to a student.

## **Nursing Mothers**

As stated in the HHS/ DFPS Minimum Standards manual (746.501(24)), mothers visiting our classroom have the right to breastfeed their child. PEI will provide a comfortable place with a seat in our center or within the classroom that enables a mother to breastfeed her child. You have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk to your child while they are in our care.

## **Clothing Requirements**

While in the classroom, children wear “inside shoes” that will be kept in their cubby and put on upon arrival. We ask that you also send a change of clothes to be kept at the school in case of accidents/spills. Please send your child in appropriate shoes for outdoor play- no “heels”, soccer cleats, or other shoes that might cause a child to fall during recess.

### **Daily Physical Activity**

It is important that children spend time outside for physical activity and for the opportunity to explore nature in a large-scale open environment. Weather permitting, daily morning recess lasts for 45 minutes prior to lunch. Children in our after school extended day program will also spend an additional 45 minutes outside. On occasion we may also have a picnic for lunch to give children additional time outside. If weather prevents us from going outside, we will play large movement games, lead a yoga session or use mats for playing and jumping to ensure children receive state required physical activity.

### **Insect Spray/Sunscreen for Recess**

During the summer months, we will apply a natural insect spray to all children prior to going outside for recess. We will not apply sunscreen given the prevalent shade during the morning and extended day recess, however, parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen to their child as a protective measure prior to morning drop off.

### **Toilet Training**

Toilet training is an important milestone for children in our educational program. As with any learning experience, this process should be as developmentally individual as each child. There is no right age that a child should be completely toilet trained, therefore, Petite Ecole does not require children to be toilet trained prior to enrollment. When your child shows signs of being physically and emotionally ready to start the potty training process, we will begin working with your child and ask that you coordinate similar efforts and methods at home. Teamwork and daily communication will provide the consistency necessary for results. In order to address expected accidents, we ask that you bring in multiple changes of clothes. PEI is not responsible for washing soiled clothes but will send them home for washing.

We also understand that accidents may still happen with children who have finished potty training. It is our policy to have children use the toilet facilities during transition periods and they will also be asked/reminded frequently to use the bathroom throughout the school day. Any child needing to use the restroom will be permitted to do so and will be supervised by an adult to assure safety. Children will not be humiliated or punished for having an accident.

We know that children learn about their bodies and sexual differences in a gradual and natural way, and given our classroom layout, children in our

environment use the bathroom facilities together, regardless of sex or age. We will maintain active adult supervision of children when they are in the bathrooms.

### **Accidents/Emergency**

We do our best to provide a safe environment for children. However, in the case of an accident, your child's teacher will notify you as soon as possible. All staff are trained and updated on annual CPR and first aid certifications. An incident report will also be completed and kept in your child's file. In the event of an accident resulting in a severe injury or illness requiring medical attention, we will call 911 or take your child to the facility indicated in your *Emergency Form*. We will also notify your child's physician right away to get all relevant information. If necessary, we will perform CPR or First Aid before notifying you. We will maintain supervision of all the children in our care, at all times, including in case of an emergency.

A report of the accident will be filed both with the school (in your child's folder) and HHS/DFPS. We will ask that you review the information for accuracy and sign it to acknowledge that you were properly notified.

### **Developmental/Behavioral Issues:**

If a child is not progressing or is exhibiting disruptive or concerning behavior, his or her parent agrees to work with PEI staff to address developmental or behavioral issues and to seek outside professional assistance if so advised by PEI staff. The parent understands that PEI cannot diagnose or treat developmental or other problems and agrees not to hold PEI liable for failure to detect any learning or other disability the child may have.

If behavioral issues arise, the Director will have ongoing conversations with the family and collaborate on strategies that can be implemented at school and at home so the child. Discussions will be framed around the objective of the program and families will be informed of their child's progress.

The parent understands that PEI may not be able to provide the proper environment or assistance for some children with disabilities or developmental or behavioral issues and is willing to work with PEI staff and outside specialists to determine the optimal learning environment for the child and to place the child in such an environment. The parent understands that this means that the child may be required to leave PEI to

receive proper assistance and/or treatment. If such is the case, the advance notice refund policies will apply.

PEI reserves the right to ask any family to withdraw their child from the school. In such cases, tuition reimbursements or waivers may be provided upon discretion of the board of directors and PEI staff.

### **Policy on Concealed or Open Carry Handguns**

Pursuant to section 30.06, penal code (trespass by license holder with a concealed handgun), a person licensed under subchapter H, chapter 411, government code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a concealed handgun.

Pursuant to section 30.07, penal code (trespass by license holder with an openly carried handgun), a person licensed under subchapter H, chapter 441, government code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a handgun that is carried openly.

## **Special Procedures**

### **Communication**

Every day, you will receive a note describing the three major events of your child's day. You will also receive the school's monthly newsletter with upcoming events, reminders, suggestions, and information about the classroom.

Information on school closures (vacation or in service days) or upcoming school events will also be sent via email and posted on our front door. This information is also updated on our website calendar.

If you need to talk to your child's teacher, she is available during recess from 11:00-11:30 and in the afternoons from 1:30-2:30 pm. The staff is very busy during drop-off and need to focus on the children. During this time, please keep communication as brief as possible. E-mail is also available for your convenience.

Parents are encouraged to discuss their child's progress with the lead teacher. It is important not to discuss problems in front of any child. We are all role models for the children so please refrain from making negative comments within the classroom and instead schedule a time to meet with

your child's teacher.

Questions or concerns regarding your child or the curriculum should be addressed to the school director.

### **Enrollment Form Updates**

If you need to make any changes to your child's enrollment forms including contact information, authorized pick-up changes, please email the Director with updates and we will make those changes to the student files. Updates must be provided in a written format.

### **Inclement Weather**

PEI follows Austin Independent School District for closures and/or delays for severe weather such as ice or snow. Please check the TV, radio, or internet for cancellation notices. An email will be sent to parents if there is a change in our scheduled start time.

### **Emergency evacuation**

In the event of an emergency situation (natural, health, and human-caused) the Director will be responsible for contacting the appropriate authorities and notifying HHS/DFPS. The Director will also be responsible for contacting parents and notifying them of the situation and whether the children have moved to an off-site premise.

### **Relocation Area:**

In case of severe weather, we will keep the children in the hallway, away from any windows that could be damaged. If we evacuate the building, we will meet in the front parking lot. If we need to leave the immediate premises, we will relocate to the Austin Police Dept Station located at 812 Springdale Rd (512) 974-5900, as an alternate shelter. As Petite Ecole does not provide transportation, we will walk as a group to this designated shelter off premises.

### **Field Trips**

To expose our students to different experiences and cultures, we try to organize one field trip per year. We rely on staff and parent volunteers to help with transportation.

Before each field trip, we will:

- Send you a notice in advance, giving you all the details for the



- upcoming field trip (location, times, transportation regulations, forms and supplies needed as well as HHS/DFPS regulations regarding activities away from the school).
- Send a permission slip before the field trip for you to sign. **Without proper authorization, your child will not be allowed to participate.**
  - Post a notice prior to the field trip, with the location, time of departure and time of return, as well as a contact number to call in case of any changes/emergency situations.

We always welcome volunteers to help with field trips. In an effort to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all involved, a mandatory orientation meeting for all volunteers/staff will be held prior to any field trip to address safety issues, DFPS regulations and expectations as well as any questions that you might have.

### **Birthdays**

For birthday celebrations, we put the emphasis on your child's place in our life and in the world. We encourage parents to bring photos that they would like to share with the children and to tell little anecdotes about their child. If you would like, you may bring a small pre-wrapped dessert/snack that we will send home in lunchboxes, however, all outside food that will be shared with a child other than your own, must be commercially prepared or prepared in a kitchen that is inspected by local health officials. Please make sure to check with your child's teacher about children with any special diet (vegetarian, food allergies, etc). Parents are welcome to attend the small event, which occurs just before morning recess.

### **Toys**

**Toys stay home!** We provide a rich and challenging environment with activities that the children cannot necessarily do at home. This encourages them to explore new material. Toys can be very distracting, both for your child as well as for his classmates, and they draw the children away from a focus on classroom activities and routines. They can also cause conflict if a child doesn't want to share something that is very special to him/her. Children often have the same toys and can get confused regarding ownership. Finally, when toys get inadvertently broken, it can be very upsetting for your child.

If your child needs or wishes to bring something to school, we encourage educational items (such as books, games or cultural artifacts) or recognitions for an accomplishment (such as a diploma, medal, something

that the child made or completed). Such items will be shared in group and are great for building your child's self-confidence and sense of belonging.

Your child may bring a stuffed animal or soft comfort item for nap, as long as it does not play music, talk or make other noise. Barbie and plastic baby dolls are considered toys and will be not permitted during nap. Comfort toys are kept in a special cubby until naptime.

Children enrolled in extended day are permitted to bring a toy from home for the after-school period. These must be placed in the extended day toys bin located in the front foyer. Please make sure that the toy is age-appropriate and is **properly labeled with the child's name or initials**. If your child wishes to bring a toy for extended day, we ask that you only bring **ONE** toy per day. We respectfully ask that you do not allow your child to bring in any play weapons, guns, etc. as we place a strong emphasis on school as a "safe place". Electronic games (game boys/Leap Frog/Leapsters,) as well as electronic trucks, cars, etc will not be permitted in the school or during extended day.

#### **Screen time in the classroom:**

On occasion we may share videos or photos via a tablet to expose children to current or monumental historical events. On a day to day basis, there will be no screen time provided to the children in our care. We want their time in the classroom to be enriching, engaging, and social.

#### **Babysitting**

We do not permit teachers to babysit children that are enrolled at the school. It is important for our staff that they are recognized as trained professionals. They are the authority figures within the classroom and are responsible for guiding a group of students. When teachers babysit, this both disrupts the group dynamic and changes the authority dynamic for the individual student due to increased familiarity with that individual child. Once your child associates a teacher with individual attention, s/he is more likely to become jealous, needy for the teacher's attention or simply consider her as a friend and act in a more liberal manner. For those reasons, it is important for your child to have very clear boundaries between home and school.

#### **Graduation**

At the end of the school year, PEI will invite students' parents and families to attend a small ceremony after dismissal during which each graduate will receive a certificate attesting to his/her accomplishments for the school

year.

## Parent Involvement

### **Transition from Home to School**

Starting school or starting in a new classroom is a big step -- both for students and for parents. In order for the transition between home and school to be as smooth as possible, we invite you to visit the school with your child prior to the first day of school. We also encourage you to attend school-sponsored social events so that you can talk about your apprehensions with other parents and your child can become familiar with his/her new environment.

When you bring your child to school in the morning, allow him/her to walk into the classroom (rather than being carried) and to carry his/her own lunchbox. It helps the child avoid clinging and fosters the feeling of being "a big kid." Develop a ritual for saying goodbye so that your child knows what to expect, and try to be brief. In doing so, you accomplish two things. First, you show your child that you trust the teacher and more generally, the school, sending a very reassuring message to your child. Second, you empower your child by showing that you trust his/her ability to adapt to a new situation and handle changes in a positive way.

This can be tricky and emotionally very difficult. It is hard to go on with your day when the last image that you have of your child is a tearful face. However, your child's day doesn't really begin until you have left. As long as parents stay, the child feels a conflict between wanting to be with the parent and wanting to be with peers and teachers.

We understand how difficult the first weeks of school can be for everyone. We will do our best to ease your family through the transition. If there is difficulty with the separation (or if you just need to know that your child didn't cry all morning after you left!), don't hesitate to talk to your child's lead teacher.

### **Attendance**

It is important that your child attends school on a regular basis. This will help with social, cognitive, and emotional development as well as preparing your child for future academic programs. Please contact the Director if your child will be out of the classroom for an extended absence

due to vacation or if they are home sick.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

We conduct annual Parent-Teacher Conferences to give you the opportunity to hear about the progress your child is making in the classroom and to discuss developmental milestones. It's also an opportunity for parents to bring up any questions/ concerns with the Director. Conferences are held in the spring either in person, via telephone, or online video platform and documentation about items discussed will be kept confidentially in your child's file to assess progress from year to year.

### **Assessments**

We continuously observe and document the children's development and plan their individualized lessons to meet their needs.

### **Observations**

Observations are an excellent preparation for the parent/teacher conference and provide insight into the Montessori method. We do offer an "open door policy", allowing parents to visit the classroom after the first six weeks of school, when children have learned and settled into the new routine. It can also be beneficial to visit the classroom after dismissal when the child is free to show you around the classroom and the types of activities they enjoy doing. Please note that a parent's presence will typically change behavior of the child and what you see during an organized observation may not be what we typically experience with your child. When you visit the classroom, we ask that you follow some simple rules that will allow you to see your child in action in his/her classroom:

- Let your child be your guide.
- Let your child decide what activity s/he wants to show you.
- Try not to correct your child, even though s/he might make mistakes. Your child wants you to be proud of him/her.
- Refrain from interrupting your child's or his/her classmates' work.
- When the children address you, be brief and let them know you are there to see them do their work.
- As a reminder, your presence in the classroom will likely change your child's normal behavior, work initiative, and routines that the teachers see on a daily basis.

If you are unsure about what to do, ask your child's teacher.

## **Parent Participation**

We welcome parent involvement in our program. Notification of events, celebrations will be sent out via email as well as our in our monthly bulletin:

- Cultural Celebrations: Parents can send in/speak with children about different cultural traditions/celebrations based on our monthly themes
- Beautification days: Bi-annual volunteer days to make repairs in the classroom/outdoor space.
- Annual Open House: promote our program by attending the event and offering a firsthand experiences with PEI.
- Spring/Fall Fundraisers: attend our annual spring fundraiser dinner/silent auction/ purchase poinsettia plants for our fall fundraiser.
- Chaperone field trips.
- On or off-campus after school playdates for parents and children.

## **End of Year Survey**

To help us asses our program, parents will be given the opportunity to complete an end of year survey, which will be emailed to our families. You are welcome to fill out the form and return it via email or a box will be set up by the front door so parents can return their responses anonymously.

## **Volunteer Requirements**

PEI, a non-profit school, is overseen by a Board comprised of, but not exclusive to, parents of current and past students. The success of the school is directly related to parent involvement. Consequently, parents are required to volunteer at or for the school for a minimum of 10 hours per academic school year and an additional 5 hours if a sibling is enrolled in the program. Parents who cannot or choose not to volunteer will be billed at the end of the school year for \$15.00 per volunteer hour not worked. Parents will regularly receive notices about volunteer opportunities. There are many committees from which to choose and time spent on them can be used toward your total volunteer hour expectation. The committees include: (Each parent will have the opportunity to sign up at the beginning of the school year.)

### **1. Website and Social Media**

To update and maintain the website, working with the Director regarding posting of themes, vocabulary, pictures

### **2. Staff Appreciation Coordinator**

To organize parents in providing periodic treats/gifts to the staff.

### **3. Marketing Committee**

To maintain marketing efforts in order to enroll students and build a positive reputation of the school in the community.

### **4. Fundraising Committee**

To create an annual fundraising plan and implement all the fundraising events and to seek and apply for grants.

### **5. Building and Grounds Committee**

To work with the Director and if needed, the property landlord, regarding building and ground needs.

### **6. Volunteer Coordinator**

To coordinate the volunteers for socials, workdays and any other special event for which volunteers will be needed.

### **7. Recruitment Committee**

To maintain the Parent Liaison Program, working with the marketing committee to ensure our messages are uniform.

### **8. Social Events Coordinator**

To organize monthly gatherings/playgroups for the families such as an afternoon in a park, dinner in a child-friendly restaurant, etc.

Other ways to provide your services and fulfill your volunteer hours are:

- **Beautification Work Days.** Once a semester, parents convene at the school during a weekend work day to handle simple repairs, landscaping upkeep and other projects identified by the teachers. The board will send a notice the week prior to Work Day notifying parents of the projects to be done that Work Day.
- **Marketing Events.** We periodically need parents to staff tables or booths at events around town to publicize the school.
- **Fundraising Events and Activities.** Parents can assist with fundraising activities such as the fall Poinsettia flower sale or the Spring soirée dinner and silent auction.

## **HHS/DFPS**

Texas Health and Human Services/The Department of Family and Protective Services (HHS/DFPS) is the entity that governs Child Care

operations and ensures compliance with the State's Minimum Standards. It is another partner working in your child's best interest.

In compliance with minimum standard 746.401, the following documents are available at all times for review:

- The most recent fire inspection
- The most recent sanitation inspection report
- The most recent gas inspection report
- The Licensing minimum standards applicable for child-care centers.
- The latest inspection report from our CCL representative.
- Information on how to report child abuse.

Useful sources of information regarding child care regulations:

**[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Care/Search\\_Texas\\_Child\\_Care](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care)**: this website allows you to research the history of any licensed childcare facility currently in operation.

Child Abuse Hotline: 1.800.252.5400

Local CCL office: 512-834.3195

Staff is required by law to report signs of abuse/neglect to DFPS. All staff members receive annual training on child abuse/neglect including prevention and warning signs. If you suspect abuse is occurring, you are asked to contact the Child Abuse Hotline.

In addition, it is required that parents be informed that the school is located in a **gang-free zone**, which is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang-related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The specific locations include day care centers. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your child care center. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code. Below is some additional on gang-free zones from DFPS:

***How do parents know where the gang-free zone ends?***

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution.

Parents may contact their local municipality or courthouse for information about obtaining a copy of a map if they choose to do so.

***What is the purpose of gang-free zones?***

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties.

***What does this mean for my child-care center?***

A child-care center must inform parents or guardians of children attending the center about the new gang free zone designation. This means parents or guardians need to be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of your center is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

**Faisons Le Voyage Ensemble!**

We are excited to have you and your child join the PEI family. We are open to feedback and suggestions for your child to have a positive and enriching experience with us. If there is ever anything we can do or there are questions you have, please do not hesitate to contact us!

Carrie Schonaerts  
School Director  
carrie@petiteecole.com  
512.302.3180



# Appendix I

## **School Staff**

### [Carrie Schonaerts, Director and Lead Teacher](#)

Carrie has been with PEI since its creation in 2000, leaving a career in business to devote herself to teaching, her true calling. Starting as an assistant, Carrie became a strong supporter of the Montessori teaching philosophy after observing the independence and initiative exhibited by the children. As the school transitioned to a non-profit organization, she became the Director of the program in 2011. She has lived in Austin for over 25 years and enjoys traveling, hiking, and working in her garden. Carrie has studied abroad in France and returns as often as possible for vacation. She holds a bachelor's degree from Southwestern University in Georgetown, TX.

### [Patricia Goodman](#)

Pat has just joined the staff at PEI in July of 2023. She is originally from New York, where she graduated from Nazareth College of Rochester with a degree in French and education. She has called Texas her home for the last 30 years, where she met her husband of 28 years and raised 3 daughters. She loves to travel, bake, read, and speak French. After having taught high school French for several years, she is delighted to be working with pre-schoolers!

### [Lynda Molinari, Classroom Assistant and Extended Day Staff](#)

Lynda Molinari has worked with children for 21 years, including 9 years at the Austin Children Shelter for abused and neglected children. She worked with children (ages newborn to 19) with physical, emotional and developmental challenges. She was a direct care staff for 7 years, followed by 3 years as a team manager for the teen mother cottage. At the shelter she used sign language to assist the young children in communicating their needs and continues to use this method to reinforce communication at Petite Ecole. It takes a village to raise a child and I feel very fortunate to be part of the village.

Outside of school she enjoys riding her bicycle throughout Austin, lifting weights and Yoga. Lynda is also a proud mother and grandmother.

### [Sabrina Meddassi, Lead Teacher preprimary class and Extended Day Staff](#)

Sabrina joined the Petite Ecole team in the fall of 2022. She was born and raised in Normandy France. She graduated school as a HR major and

worked for 10 years as an account executive and project manager for multiple national staffing companies.

Sabrina took time from the corporate world to volunteer in a non-profit primary Moroccan school where she helped implement the French language program. She enjoyed it so much so that when she moved to Austin she decided to continue pursuing education and more specifically French language and culture education. Sabrina enjoys tennis, paddling on lady bird lake, and very good cheese!

### Seth Breaux

Seth came to Austin from Beaumont, Texas in 2017 and joined our classroom in the fall, 2022 semester. Mr. Breaux worked for several years at the Burrow Preschool and Habibi's Hutch Preschool before joining the PEI team. He is a current student at Texas State University, earning his Bachelor's Degree in French and hopes to one day achieve a Master's Degree in Romantic Linguistics. Outside of work he enjoys live music, being active with his two dogs, and staying involved with his community.

### Board Members

- Brittaney Cook: [iambrittaneycook@gmail.com](mailto:iambrittaneycook@gmail.com)
- Ryan Confer: [ryanconfer@gmail.com](mailto:ryanconfer@gmail.com)
- Rob and Dana Gross: [danacorral1@gmail.com](mailto:danacorral1@gmail.com),  
[rjgross16@gmail.com](mailto:rjgross16@gmail.com)
- Elizabeth Hoffman: [elizabethhoff29@gmail.com](mailto:elizabethhoff29@gmail.com)
- Nicole Holle: [nrholl@gmail.com](mailto:nrholl@gmail.com)
- Stan Smith: [stan@teamindigoco.com](mailto:stan@teamindigoco.com)
- Mikaela Thomas: [mikaelathomas@gmail.com](mailto:mikaelathomas@gmail.com)
- Carrie Schonaerts: [carrie@petiteecole.com](mailto:carrie@petiteecole.com)

## Appendix II

If you would like additional information on Community Resources, please speak with the school Director.

### Community Resources

#### Abuse/Neglect and Safety

<https://centerforchildprotection.org/>

<https://www.safeaustin.org/>

### **Obtaining Health Benefits**

<https://austintexas.gov/page/affordable-care-act-help>

### **Texas Children's Health Plan Options**

<https://www.texaschildrenshealthplan.org/what-we-offer>

### **Pediatric Dentist Searchable List by Zip Code**

<https://www.dentists4kids.com/dentists/>

### **Children's Oral Health Information**

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDZXSMU2IAk>

### **Breastfeeding Support**

<https://www.austintexas.gov/content/moms-place>

<https://www.texaslll.org/>

### **Nutrition Guidelines**

[https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2021-](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans-2020-2025.pdf)

[03/Dietary Guidelines for Americans-2020-2025.pdf](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans-2020-2025.pdf)

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/nutrition-for-kids/art-20049335>

<https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/kids>

[https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Sample-One-Day-Menu-for-a-Two-Year-Old.aspx)

[stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Sample-One-Day-Menu-for-a-Two-Year-Old.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Sample-One-Day-Menu-for-a-Two-Year-Old.aspx)

[https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Serving-Sizes-for-Toddlers.aspx)

[stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Serving-Sizes-for-Toddlers.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Serving-Sizes-for-Toddlers.aspx)

### **Home Gardening**

<https://montessorirocks.org/vegetable-garden-for-kids/>

<https://kidsgardening.org/gardening-basics/>

<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/library/gardening/texas-home-vegetable-gardening-guide/>

### **Farmer's Markets**

<https://www.austintexas.org/austin-insider-blog/post/austin-farmers-markets/>

<http://www.edibleaustin.com/index.php/farmersmarkets>

<https://austin.eater.com/2020/7/1/21307473/farmers-markets-in-austin-area>

### **Screen Time**

<https://www.screenfreeparenting.com/>

<https://services.aap.org/en/patient-care/media-and-children/>

**General Information**

<https://www.211.org/>

**French Community Resources**

French Alliance: <https://www.afaustin.org/>

Austin Accueil: <https://austinaccueil.org/>

**Food Resources/Droceries**

<http://centraltexasfoodbank.org/get-help>

<http://www.connectatx.org/>

<http://www.hopefoodpantryaustin.org>

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/food/snap-food-benefits>

# Parent's Agreement

**Please read and complete the following form.**

**We cannot complete enrollment of any student whose parent(s) has not submitted all required forms.**

**The Parent's Agreement must be signed** to acknowledge that you are familiar with PEI's policies and procedures and that you agree to abide by them.

DFPS now requires that we keep a copy of our discipline procedure signed by the parents.

## **Petite Ecole Discipline Policy**

Our goal is to help the child develop as an autonomous individual via a kind atmosphere promoting respect (for self and others) and problem solving skills. Autonomy means the person is governed by himself/herself.

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child.
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

The methods of guidance that all staff use are:

- **Reminders.** A child running inside will be reminded that running is for outside and asked to use his "walking feet".
- **Redirection.** A child climbing the fence is sent to climb the playscape
- **Compliance training.** The children practice appropriate behaviors with the teacher alone or in groups, such as coming when called, walking across the room, etc.
- **Language of encouragement.** The staff uses language that appreciates efforts and emphasizes specific accomplishments. For example, rather than a vague "Good job," an adult might say "You put your shoes on all by yourself today!" (even though they are on the wrong feet).
- **Positive language** that lets the child know what the expectations are. For example, an adult may ask a child "Please use your walking feet" instead of "Don't run!" Positive phrasing helps avoid power struggles.
- **Natural and logical consequences.** These are arranged by the

adult to be experienced by the child as logical, reasonable and directly related to the behavior. The emphasis is on treating the child with respect and dignity. Natural consequences help the child understand the relation between cause and effect and allow separating the deed from the doer. Logical consequences are based on a democratic relationship between adults and children, not on a perceived need for retaliation. For example, a child

- who keeps on shouting after repeatedly being asked to use an inside voice will be taken outside.
- **Renewal time.** This is a last resort when the child's actions are dangerous to others or himself/herself. Rather than being a punitive measure, the staff presents it as "renewal time," a valid way to let the child repair mixed-up feelings so that harmonious interaction with others can follow. It provides an opportunity for the child to be accountable for his/her actions. The adult avoids nagging, arguing and threats. Renewal time is designed in a way that allows the child to be away from the other children while still having the teacher's attention.

The following methods will NOT be used by anyone at PEI:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment: This includes but is not limited to pinching, hitting, shaking or biting a child.
- Arbitrary punishment, such as punishment associated with foods, naps or toilet training, putting anything on or in a child's mouth.
- Emotional punishment. Children are not to be yelled at, ridiculed or humiliated. They are not to be subjected to any harsh, abusive or profane language or be left in a dark room, bathroom or closet with the door closed or left in a locked room.

-----  
(Signature-Parent)

-----  
(Date)



## Emergency Evacuation Plan

### Petite École Internationale

#### **Emergency Evacuation:**

In the event of an emergency situation (natural, health, and human-caused) the Director will be responsible for contacting the appropriate authorities and notifying DFPS. The Director will also be responsible for contacting parents and notifying them of the situation and whether the children have moved to an off site premise.

#### **Relocation Area:**

If we evacuate the building, we will meet in the front parking lot.

In case of severe weather, we will keep the children in the front foyer, away from any windows that could be damaged.

If we need to leave the immediate premises, we will relocate to the Austin Police Department Station at 812 Springdale Rd, (512) 947-5900, as an alternate shelter. As Petite Ecole does not provide transportation, we will walk as a group to this designated shelter off premises.

#### **First Aid Kit and Emergency Materials:**

A First Aid Kit, flashlight, and emergency weather radio will be located in the hallway by the ADA bathroom so staff can take these supplies in the event that we evacuate our building and/or move to our safe shelter off the premises.

#### **Emergency Preparedness Drills**

##### **FIRE DRILLS and CARBON MONOXIDE TESTS:**

Fire drills will be conducted monthly, including documentation of our exit time from the building. Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors will be tested monthly to assure they are in working order.

##### **SHELTERING/SEVERE WEATHER DRILLS:**

These drills for emergency weather situations (tornado, hurricane, flooding, etc) will be conducted every 3 months. The secure location for these drills will be in the front door foyer area as it is isolated from windows.

#### LOCK DOWN DRILLS

Lock down drills will take place 4 times per year. These drills will help us prepare for volatile persons who might be in the school vicinity. Our safe space for these practice drills will be the school office, which is a contained space with a door that can be locked.