**1. Purpose and Goals**

The purpose of Kindernest Montessori School is to provide an environment in which children become active participants in the learning process. Our setting allows children to grow intellectually, spiritually, physically and socially. Kindernest‘s philosophy is based upon the work of Maria Montessori, who believed that education must be an active, rather than a passive process on the part of the student.

The goal of Kindernest Montessori School is to make each child’s first educational experience a positive, happy and fulfilling one. The staff strives to help each child become self-confident and independent. It is the school’s aim to nurture each child’s innate desire to learn. Kindernest achieves its goals by providing a program that stimulates each child’s creative, intellectual, moral, physical and social development.

Kindernest Montessori School welcomes students of any race, religion, color or ethnic origin.

**2. What is Montessori?**

Montessori education is a method in which children learn by using hands-on materials and projects with the guidance and supervision of a teacher. Kindernest is a prepared environment where the child is given the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially and physically.

Learning materials are presented in order to give the children exposure to numerals, color, texture, weight and sound in an orderly succession. This type of exposure helps prepare the children for reading, writing, math, geometry and all other subjects required in the educational process.

We first introduce the child to the exercises of practical life. Exercises such as dressing and personal grooming help the child to better know and control both himself/herself and his/her world. Opportunity for individual movement and activity is also provided. These exercises help develop the child’s manual dexterity for using a pencil, as well as developing hand-eye coordination and reading left to right.

**3. Early Literacy**

To prepare students to become lifetime readers, a solid foundation for early literacy is advised. Age appropriate activities are provided for students at Kindernest to begin to build their understanding of the written word. Hands-on activities that appeal to all learning styles are provided to expose children to the concepts of reading, writing and reading comprehension.

**4. School Board/Kindernest Team**

Kindernest is governed by an Executive Team and Team Members that are responsible to the Holy Ghost Lutheran Church Council. The purpose of this team is to assist the school with policy making decisions. For the remainder of the handbook, when Kindernest is mentioned, it includes the Pastor, Director and Kindernest Team.

**5. Number and Composition of the Kindernest Team**

The team shall consist of no less than five (5) members, or more than seven (7) members. At least half of the members shall be members of Holy Ghost Lutheran Church; the remainder may be parents of the School, Church members or community persons. One member shall be a Holy Ghost Lutheran Church Council person and shall be appointed by the Church Council. A designated Pastor of Holy Ghost Lutheran Church, the Financial Officer, and the Director of the school shall serve as ex-officio members of the Team and as such, shall have voice, but no vote on any matters. All other Team Members shall each be entitled to vote.

**6. School Director**

The School Director is in charge of the daily operations of Kindernest. In his/her absence, the Assistant Director and the Pastor will be in charge. In the rare event that all three are absent, one teacher will be designated “in charge” to handle any concerns.

**7. Parental Involvement**

A small private school requires active support from the parents. Parents are encouraged to communicate on a daily basis regarding their child’s progress and behavior. Parent may visit Kindernest and observe the class activities at any time during school hours without prior notice provided classes are uninterrupted.

During special holidays Kindernest will have classroom parties. Sign-up sheets will be posted by the classroom teacher to enable parents to assist with these special events if needed. All snacks must be store bought with complete nutritional labels attached.

From time to time Kindernest will ask for parent volunteers to assist with fundraising activities. All families are asked to contribute to annual fundraising efforts.

In addition to the memos and notices placed in the children’s cubbies, there are also important notices placed on Kindernest’s bulletin board and dry erase board. Parents are asked to check these for announcements from Department of Family and Protective Services, fire and health departments as well as general information that may change over the course of the year.

**8. Regular School Hours and Late Fees**

Kindernest opens at 7:30 a.m. and closes at 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday during the regular school year. Pick up time should be before 5:30 p.m. Late pickups will be charged $2.00 per minute for the first five minutes and $5.00 per minute thereafter for each child in care. We follow the atomic clock on our sign-in table. **All late pickup fees must be paid in full before the child may return to school.** We are not interested in enhancing Kindernest’s income with these fees; we want to get our staff to their own families on time. If persistent late pick-ups occur, we may question your ability to work with our policies.

Arrivals after 9:00 a.m. must be approved by the director.

Summer school hours may be adjusted due to staffing or enrollment numbers. Please check with the office for the summer school schedule.

**9. Registration/Maintenance Fees**

Registration is an annual fee due at the beginning of each school year even if your child is already enrolled in Kindernest. This fee, if paid by April 15 during early registration, reserves a place for your child for the upcoming school year.

A maintenance or supply fee is due each semester in September, January and June, if attending summer school.

All fees are non-refundable. Fee amounts are noted on the current year’s tuition rate sheet.

**10. Administrative Fees**

Administrative fees will be charged for copies of any documentation requested by parents. A fee of $25.00 minimum will be charged for the first hour, an additional $25.00 for each hour thereafter and $.10 per copy for use of office copier.

**11. Payment Policy**

Tuition payments are due in accordance with the payment schedule on the school calendar. A $5.00 late fee may be assessed on the 5th business day after the due date (1st business day of the month). An additional $1.25 may be assessed for each additional day beyond the 5th day that the payment is late.

If two late notices are given to you during any one month period without response by you to the director, your child will be withdrawn from the school roster. Special arrangements can be made to ensure that the tuition is paid in a timely manner.

It is preferable that tuition be paid by check, bank draft or money order, made payable to Kindernest. Checks may be mailed or given to the Director or teacher on duty. Cash payments should be given to the director. If extra fees are included, please provide a breakdown of the items paid.

There will be a $25.00 fee assessed for returned checks. If any two checks are returned to Kindernest because of insufficient funds, Kindernest will no longer accept personal checks from you. Future payment s will be in the form of cash, money orders or cashier’s checks.

Every effort is made to keep tuition and registration fees at a minimum while maintaining a quality environment for your child. If, however, it is found that the enrollment is not sufficient to support the school’s budget for the year, it may be necessary to increase tuition.

**12. Potty Training**

The recommended age for potty training is 36-38 months. Kindernest requires that your child be potty training by 3 ½ years of age regardless of their placement. This will allow your child to be placed into his/her appropriate setting. If your child is unable to meet the policy requirements for Kindernest, we may be unable to serve their needs.

As noted on our Tuition Rate Schedule, children that are potty trained and have turned three receive reduced rate of tuition. In the event a child is not potty trained at three (3), the two year rate remains in effect. At such time potty training occurs (no daily accidents), the tuition rate will be reduced with the approval of the Director. Children must be potty trained to enter the three (3) year program.

**13. Extra Days/Pro-rated Fees**

Pro-rated days are charged according to the fee set on the Tuition Rate Sheet. No drop-ins are accepted.

**14. Admission and Immunizations**

A child is admitted to Kindernest when all enrollment forms have been completed, registration and tuition fees have been paid and Kindernest has received a health record signed by the child’s physician. The health record must include all current immunizations as required by the state. The State Health Department requires Kindernest to keep all records of immunization current. Parents must bring the updated health record to Kindernest each time the child receives a new immunization so that a copy may be placed in the child’s file for auditing purposes. When required by the Department of Health or a local health authority, Kindernest will require an immunization update that must be completed in a timely manner for continued admission.

It is highly recommended that all caregivers and employees in direct contact with children have an updated flu shot (annually) and a Tdap booster(every ten years). If they opt to not take the shot, they may be required to wear a mask and gloves the case of an outbreak of flu or whooping cough.

**15. Hearing and Vision Screening**

Texas law requires that all children enrolled in care who are four (4) years of age by September 1 of each year will be screened for possible vision and hearing problems prior to completion of the first semester of enrollment or within 120 calendar days of enrollment, whichever is longest, or present evidence of screening conducted one year prior to enrollment. If a child misses the scheduled screenings, parents will be required to have their child screened independently.

**16. Withdrawal and Dismissal**

Kindernest requires that parents notify the Director of any termination of a child’s enrollment prior to the end of the school year or summer program with a written statement to that effect.

All new students will have a six weeks probationary period. During that time the parent or Kindernest may withdraw the student. The unused portion of any tuition paid will be fully refunded to the parent. Students may be reassigned probation at any time at the discretion of the Director.

Two week’s notice must be given, in writing, in order for the unused tuition to be refunded on a pro-rated basis. Failure to give written notice of withdrawal allows the next tuition payment to become due.

Kindernest reserves the right to dismiss a child for the following:

1. Non-payment of tuition or fees

2. Prolonged unexcused absences

3. Medical, psychological or social evaluation indicates special needs the school cannot meet

4. Inability of the school or staff to meet the needs of a student or parent

5. Failure of student or parent to follow school policy

6. Serious or habitual student behavior problems such as, but not limited to:

* Excessive aggressiveness to peers or staff
* Foul or inappropriate language or actions
* Destructive behavior to self, others or property

**Behavior that is out of control places the center at risk. The Director reserves the right to send home a student immediately, temporarily and/or permanently at his/her discretion.**

The following is the procedure for dismissal due to non-payment of tuition and /or fees:

* Parents are notified of past due account.
* Parents are again notified five (5) days prior to the end of the month. The child will not be allowed to return to Kindernest until past due account is rectified.
* The child is removed from the school roster.

**\*The Executive Team reserves the right to issue a discharge should a parent/family be discovered to have engaged in slander, gossip or other negative discourse against the school at any time.**

**\*\*If the Executive Team is made aware, by the Director, of a situation where a parent has displayed willful negligence in cooperating with the staff’s good faith attempts to resolve disciplinary, educational or policy issues, the Executive Team reserves the right to dismiss immediately.**

**17. Discipline**

Kindernest uses a positive and respectful approach in helping children develop discipline and self control. The logical consequences of an act are used whenever possible. For example: if a child makes a mess, the child corrects the situation; if a child infringes on the space of other children, the child will be separated from the group. Students are expected to display age appropriate control while in the school setting.

Kindernest is responsible for the child while on the school premises or a school related activity even if accompanied by their parent. All school rules apply while in the care of the school.

**18. Attendance, Absenteeism, Arrival and Departure**

Consistent and prompt attendance is advised. If the child is ill and/ or absent, the parents are requested to notify Kindernest (830-997-8939). Arrivals after 9:00 a.m. will be admitted only with the approval of the Director**.**

Kindernest school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends around 3:00 p.m. Kindernest does not serve breakfast; all breakfast items should be eaten prior to arriving at school. As a courtesy to our working parents, our hours of operation during the regular school year are from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

**\*\*\*Please do not park in front of the door; it is a fire lane. The parking lot behind the church is designated for parents.**

**Please do not assume that a staff person has seen you and your child arrive and depart.**

**Arrival:**

1. Sign-in your child at the sign-in table by the front door. If it is after 9:00 a.m., please check with the Director to make sure your child may be admitted.

2. Tell the appropriate person that your child has arrived. *Do not allow a child to walk inside or go to their room* ***alone****.*

**Departure:**

1. Sign-out your child.

2. Tell the appropriate person you are taking your child.

3. Check the white erase board for any notices or announcements.

4. Gather your child’s work and possessions from his/her cubby and take bedding home on Fridays to launder.

**\*Note that Kindernest has no legal authority to refuse either parent the right to pick-up their child unless a court order has granted temporary custody to one parent or a third party, and Kindernest has been furnished with a copy of the court order.**

**19. Illness**

Children **must not** be brought to Kindernest if they are ill. Parents will be notified to pick up their child for their health and the health of all children and staff after a well check has been conducted. (See # 19 and #20). The following rules will be maintained:

A. Fever: The parent will be required to pick up his/her child of the child’s temperature is 99.4 degrees or higher. The child may return to school ***24 hours after*** the temperature returns to normal.

B. Colds: If a child is apparently ill and unable to participate comfortably in class activities, please keep them at home for their comfort and the health of others .

C. Communicable Disease: Parents shall report any exposure to communicable diseases in order for the Director to alert the other parents. If the child contracts a communicable disease, his/her readmission will be only upon the approval of the Director and upon receipt of a written note from the child’s physician.

D. Allergies: The symptoms of allergies may be similar to those of any illness. Allergies should be confirmed by a physician. Please carefully fill out the allergy section of your child’s health form, listing seasons, foods medication and symptoms. Sometimes allergy symptoms are so severe that the child cannot participate comfortably at Kindernest. The school reserves the right to send a child home under these circumstances.

E. Vomiting and diarrhea: The child may not return to Kindernest until ***24 hours*** after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea.

F. Lice: Head lice are small insects that live on or near the scalp. They spread quickly through close personal contact and sharing items such as brushes, hats, helmets, pillows, etc. Once lice or their eggs (nits) are detected, the child will be sent home for treatment. Please consult your doctor about treatment. The child will not be admitted until all lice and nits are gone to be determined by the director or person in charge. Nits that are dead will not cling to the hair shaft and should be removed. Continued monitoring for lice is recommended since they reoccur very easily.

G. Unexplained rash that could indicate something contagious.

***We reserve the right to send a child home for any of the above, but not limited to these symptoms after a health check has been conducted (see #20).***

**20. Illness and Exclusion of a Sick Child:**

Parents will be called to pick up their child when any of, but not limited to, the above symptoms occur and a health check has been conducted. Kindernest does not have a well child program, so we will expect the child to be picked up as soon as possible for their comfort and health as well as for the risk of exposure to others. The ill child may be moved to a quieter and more isolated classroom if there is available staff to supervise them. If ratios will not allow us to do this, the child may rest quietly on their mat away from the others, but with supervision, until the parent arrives. It is the intent of Kindernest to provide as much comfort and TLC as possible.

**21. Health Checks**

Observation of the child and communication with the child’s parents/guardians are the key elements of a health check. Health checks are defined as a visual or physical assessment of a child to identify potential concerns about a child’s health or behavior. Upon the return of a child that has been ill or injured, staff may conduct a health check to assess the well being of a child. A health check may also be conducted in the event a child appears to be ill or injured upon arrival or becomes ill/ injured while in the care of the center. The child’s immediate caregiver, Assistant Director or the Director may initiate and/or perform and document the check. The health check will include, but will not limited to, assessment of the child’s breathing, coughing, discharge, skin color, swelling, bruising, cuts, rashes, sores, temperature and general well being. If the child can talk, then questions may be asked. If the child’s assessment indicates the need for care beyond what the center can do, the Director or Assistant Director will approve the contacting of parents or guardians immediately (See #18 and #19).

Staff will participate in periodic trainings on how to conduct and interpret a health check. These trainings will be led by a trained health professional.

**22. Medical Emergencies/Contact information**

In case of an accident or illness, Kindernest will determine whether the illness or injury requires immediate attention by a physician. If so, Kindernest will (1) contact emergency medical services to transport by ambulance, (2) give first aid or CPR when needed, (3) contact the parent and /or listed contact and (4) contact the physician identified in the child’s record. ***The parent is responsible for providing and updating medical or contact information that may be needed in case of an emergency.*** This includes current telephone numbers, doctor names and numbers and/or emergency adult contact information.

**23. Medications**

Prescription medications should be given before or after Kindernest hours. If this is not possible, prescription medications must be in the original container, labeled with the child’s name, date, directions and the physicians name/contact information. Non-prescription medications must be in the original container and labeled with the child’s name, administration date and dosage. **No cold medications will be given**. Any medication must also have a completed medication form signed and dated by parent/guardian requesting and giving permission for the child to take the meds at stated times. Kindernest will keep this record for three months after the child is in care.

KINDERNEST CANNOT AND WILL NOT ADMINISTER MEDICATIONS IF THE PREVIOUS GUIDELINES ARE NOT EXPLICITLY FOLLOWED.

**24. Conferences**

We see and speak with most of you on a daily basis. These quick daily updates are great, but parent/teacher conferences result in better understanding and help teachers in guiding your child. We encourage these conferences. Staff may take the initiative in arranging a conference with a child’s parent(s) if the staff has concerns about the health, behavior or development of a child. Please do not discuss specific concerns about your child in their presence. Children will not attend conferences except in special cases or if specifically invited to do so.

Parents are also welcome to discuss the policies and procedures of Kindernest, including the items in this handbook, with the Director. Please contact the Director to arrange a mutually satisfactory time for such discussions.

**25. Procedure for Grievances**

In the event that a parent wishes to seek redress for any matter relating to a student, the teacher must be approached **first**. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily settled, the parent **should secondly speak to the Director**. If, after discussion with both teacher and parent, the Director cannot settle the case, it may be referred to the Executive Team.

**26. Parental Notifications**

While Kindernest encourages discussions with the lead teacher concerning the development of students, there are certain forms of parental notification required under the following circumstances:

A. After the teacher ensures the safety of the child, the teacher must notify the parent immediately after a child:

* Is injured and the injury requires medical attention by a healthcare professional.
* Has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from Kindernest.
* Has been involved in any situation that placed the child at risk. For example, a teacher or assistant forgetting a child on the playground or preventing a child from wondering away from Kindernest unsupervised.
* Has been involved in any situation that renders Kindernest unsafe, such as a fire, flood, or damage to Kindernest as a result of severe weather.

 B. The teacher must notify the parent of less serious injuries when the parent picks the child up from Kindernest. Less serious injuries include, but are not limited to minor cuts, scrapes, bruises or bites from other children that require first aid treatment by employees.

 C. The Director must notify all parents of children in Kindernest in writing and within 48 hours of becoming aware that a child or employee of Kindernest has contracted a communicable disease that the law requires Kindernest to report to the Texas Department of Health as specified in 25 TAC97, Subchapter A (relating to Control of Communicable Diseases).

 D. Kindernest must provide written notice within 48 hours to the parents of all children in a group when there is an outbreak of lice or other infestation in the group. This notice will be posted in a prominent and publicly accessible place where parents can easily view it or Kindernest may send an individual note to each parent.

**27. Chapel**

Chapel or devotion services with a Holy Ghost Lutheran Pastor are scheduled every Tuesday for the three and P-K year classes, and on Thursdays for P-K classes for a simple worship service. Bible stories, songs, verses, prayers and other general concepts that are held by all ecumenical Christian faiths are taught. Prayers are said before meals and snacks.

**28. Rest Time/Nap**

As mandated by the state, all students will observe a rest period for two hours following lunch every day. Rest time is from 12:30-2:30 p.m. for the two year group, and 1:00-3:00 p.m. for all others. Children who have not fallen asleep and lain quietly for the first hour may be given the opportunity to look at a book provided or lay quietly provided they do not disturb others who are still sleeping.

Parents are required to provide a mat, small pillow and blanket that should be laundered weekly.

**29. Clothing**

Parents will need to provide a complete change of clothes for their child including underwear and socks.

* **All clothing and belongs must be clearly labeled with your child’s name.**
* **Tennis shoes with laces or Velcro straps are required.**
* **NO flip flops, boots or slip on shoes, please.**

Make certain that clothing is appropriate for the season (jackets for cool days, light fabrics for warm days). Girls may need to wear shorts under skirts.

**30. Toys**

Children may **NOT bring toys from home.** Any exceptions made by a teacher will be noted to you. Show and Tell is a learning experience. Those items may be themed or simply support an area of study. Any items brought from home may be lost or broken, and Kindernest cannot be responsible for them.

**31. Birthdays**

Please contact your child’s teacher if you want to bring special treats to celebrate your child’s birthday. Items should be store bought and accompanied by a nutritional label. Birthdays are special to Kindernest, and we will recognize his/her special day. Birthday invitations to any off campus event may NOT be distributed at Kindernest unless all classmates are invited. Contact information is not released by the school.

**32. Field trips/Volunteer Reading Program at Vocational Building**

Field trip permission slips are provided and signed /unsigned in the registration packet. Any other special outings will have a separate notice sent home one week prior to the event to detail information about the trip.

Student s may have an opportunity to attend a special story time/reading program provided by volunteers in the Church’s vocational building. Schedules will be provided as they are available.

All permission slips should be returned by the due date to ensure participation.

**33. Breastfeeding**

Parents have the right to breast feed their child and /or provide breast milk for their child while the child is in care. Kindernest has a room available for your comfort and privacy while breastfeeding.

**34. Emergency Preparedness Plan**

A. In the case of fire

* Teachers will use the exits nearest to your classroom and farthest from the fire
* Teachers will note exit maps posted at exits and in classrooms and follow fire drill procedures to assigned locations outside of building
* Teachers will keep children clear of the emergency lanes
* Teachers will proceed to the church sanctuary, church office or education building depending on location of emergency
* Call **911** When safe to do so
* Teachers will take transition folders and care bags. Teachers will take attendance so that all children are accounted for at the new location
* Parents will be called for pick-up. All staff will continue to care for and supervise children until the last child has been released.

B. Severe Weather

* Staff will be alerted by person in charge (whistle/all-weather radio) of impending weather danger
* Teachers will relocate children with transition folders and care bags to interior corridor walls and close all doors and windows
* All occupants will assume the protective kneeling position until threat has passed
* All occupants will be accounted for and then removed if necessary to church sanctuary/office for parent pick-up and/or first aid if needed. All staff will continue to care for and supervise children until the last child has been released.

C. Sheltering/Lock-down

* Staff will be alerted by person in charge (whistle/cell phone) of lockdown
* Teachers will relocate children with transition folders and care bags to interior corridor closest to director’s office
* Call **911** when/if possible
* Staff will secure all exits and close interior doors.
* Person in charge will be responsible for communicating with local authorities and CCL. Teachers will use cellphones to contact parents. All staff will continue to care for and supervise children until the last child has been released.

D. Evacuation/Alternative Sites

The site of choice depends on the emergency and the site safest from the evacuation. Teachers will take transition folders and care bags and walk children to these sites. If the child is unable to walk they will be carried by assistant(s).

For off-campus relocation, teachers and students will walk to the gravel parking lot bordering Llano Street or the nearest safe location to await transportation from FISD school bus. All staff will continue to care for and supervise until the last child has been released.

* On-campus relocation site includes the church sanctuary, the church offices or the church education building: Holy Ghost Lutheran Church

 103 East San Antonio

 Fredericksburg, Texas

 830-997-2288 (Church Office)

* Off-Campus relocation is partnered with: Bethany Lutheran Church

 110 West Austin

 Fredericksburg, Texas

 830-997-2069 or 830-997-8751

**Please note that the City of Fredericksburg or the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator may change or amend these locations if necessary without notice.**

E. Transition Folder – Staff are required to use their transition folder when moving children from one area to another. It should contain;

* Student attendance list and tracking information
* Parent/emergency contact information
* Authorization for emergency care
* Local authority emergency numbers

F. Care Bags – In the event of an emergency each group will have a care bag containing necessary items for the continued care of the students. Each bag will contain;

* First aid supplies, flashlight, snacks, sanitary wipes/diapers, tissues, sealable plastic bag

**35. Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect**

Child Care Licensing Department requires that all child care centers receive annual training in order to identify, report, treat and prevent suspected occurrences of neglect, abuse and exploitation. Families are encouraged to obtain assistance and intervention from the Department of Family and Protective Services at the DFPS Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-252-5400).

**36. Contacting Texas Department of Protective Regulatory Services (TDPRS)**

Kindernest is licensed by TDPRS. The Child Care Licensing Department safeguards the basic health, safety and well-being of Texas children by developing and enforcing minimum standards for child-caring facilities and child-placing agencies; investigates complaints and serious incidents involving day care and residential-care facilities, and if necessary, takes corrective or adverse action, licenses group day care homes, day care centers, registered family homes, child-placing agencies and private and publicly owned residential child-care facilities.

Parents may contact TDPRS local office in Kerrville at:

819 Water Street, Suite 230

Kerrville, Texas 78028 (830) 257-8111

**A COPY OF STATE REQUIRED MINIMUM STANDARDS MOST RECENT LICENSED REPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW IN THE OFFICE UPON REQUEST.**

TDPRS also has a very helpful website with additional information at: http:/www.idprs.state.gov

TDPRS has a child abuse hotline for reporting any suspected child abuse. The number is 1-800-252-5400 for reporting abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, the elderly or people with disabilities.

 Edited: February, 2014