



Quick Reference Handbook

2014-2015

Please Note: This Quick Reference Handbook was developed to assist parents in quickly accessing key information about our program. It does not replace our full set of student policies, which can be found on our website at charter.willowoakmontessori.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Address:

Willow Oak Montessori: A Public Charter School
Bold Building @ Governors Village
50101 Governors Dr, Suite 170
Chapel Hill, NC 27517

Phone:

919.240.7787

Fax:

919.869.1790

Web:

charter.willowoakmontessori.org

E-mail:

info@willowoakmontessori.org

School Day:

8:30am-3:15pm

Administrative Team:

Head of School: Pete Rubinas
Director of Curriculum & Instruction: Meneca Davis
Diverse Learning Community Coordinator: Melissa Beck
Business Manager: Melissa Frey

OUR MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

Willow Oak Montessori strives to assist children in achieving their unique potential as responsible global citizens by nurturing self-confidence and independent decision-making in a stimulating, creative, and diverse Montessori community.

Our program follows the philosophy, method, and curriculum of Dr. Maria Montessori. Our classrooms and our teachers demonstrate a deep respect for the individual child, which allows each child to reach his/her full potential. The nurturing of independence leads each child towards purposeful behavior; self-motivated and joyful learning; confident problem-solving; and creative thinking. With a central focus on character development, children learn peaceful conflict resolution based on kindness and care of each member of the classroom community. Children develop a strong sense of personal, social, and global responsibility.

An integrated curriculum, which aligns with the Common Core Standards and NC Standard Course of Study, is multi-sensory, sequential, and structured in a specially-prepared environment that supports each child's unique developmental milestones, learning style, and rate of learning. An authentic Montessori program is sensitive to the needs of the "whole child." In addition to a robust and comprehensive academic curriculum, each child's emotional, social, and developmental tasks are considered equally important to intellectual growth.

Each multi-aged grouping of children is taught by an effective team of state-certified and Montessori-credentialed teachers. At least one teacher in each classroom has been educated in a MACTE-accredited Montessori teacher education program, which helps to ensure that the teaching team is considering all aspects of the child's development, including the development of social skills and positive emotional growth. These teams of trained professionals are uniquely qualified to work with students whose needs may differ from those of others.

Willow Oak Montessori honors and respects the diversity of our world, welcomes students from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and does not discriminate on any basis including race, creed, class, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, family structure or sexual orientation. In accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), we welcome students with special needs and will work with each child's family to provide an appropriate education experience.

ORGANIZATION

Willow Oak Montessori is a non-profit North Carolina public charter school governed by a Board of Directors. The Board is responsible for setting policy and monitoring the performance of the school in accordance with the school's mission, its charter, and applicable laws and regulations. Board meetings are open to the public and parents are welcome to attend. Meeting schedules, minutes, and additional information are located at <http://charter.willowoakmontessori.org/board>.

The Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school in accordance with Board policy. The Director of Curriculum & Instruction works closely with the faculty, our students, and their families to assure the quality of an authentic Montessori program for all. Our Diverse Learning Community Coordinator helps to ensure that we are meeting the diverse learning needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Finally, our Business Manager is responsible for overseeing the school's financial and business operations with the assistance of our Office Administrator.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The school day is 8:30am-3:15pm. Drop-off is between 8:10 and 8:30, and pick-up is from 3:15 to 3:35.

Fee-based before-school care is provided beginning at 7:00am, and after-school care is provided by the YMCA on-site at the Bold Building until 6:00pm. Prior registration is required for both programs. Please contact the school office for more information regarding these programs.

CALENDAR

The approved Academic Calendar is attached. You can also find it online at <http://charter.willowoakmontessori.org/school-calendar>.

ATTENDANCE

To receive the greatest benefit from our Montessori program, your child's regular attendance is extremely important. In addition, we are required to comply with the North Carolina General Statute on Compulsory Attendance. Please see the full set of Student Policies for more information.

Willow Oak Montessori requests that families call the school office as soon as possible to notify the School that their child will be absent. Excused absences include:

- Illness or injury;
- Medical, dental or other appointment with a health care provider;
- Necessary religious observances;
- Involvement in a traffic or other accident;
- Participation in a valid and important educational opportunity, such as travel, with prior approval of the Head of School;
- Other unavoidable and excusable reasons as determined by the Head of School or his or her designee.

To be excused for an absence, a student shall submit within 3 school days of the absence, when reasonably feasible, a note signed by the parent explaining the reason(s) for the absence. The note must be turned in at the School office and directed to the Head of School or his/her designee. Failure to comply with these procedures may result in the absence being unexcused.

Each day begins with a classroom meeting. This meeting helps set the tone for the day and gives each child a sense of belonging, and the structure and consistency that every child needs. Arriving on time (no later than 8:30) will give your child the opportunity to feel a full member of his/her classroom community, and to avoid that awkward feeling of walking into a situation "late."

MORNING DROP-OFF

Drop-off occurs from 8:10 to 8:30 each day, except for those students enrolled in before-school care. When you arrive at the designated drop-off location, a staff member will greet your child at your car. Please avoid parking and walking up to drop off your child, as this may create confusion for staff members and other parents. The staff will see to it that your child gets safely into the building and to his/her classroom. A quick "See you later. Have a great day at school!" will give your child the assurance that school is a safe and fun place to be.

To get to the drop-off zone, please enter Governors Village via Governors Drive from the stop light at Mt. Carmel Church Rd. Turn left onto Moring Drive, and then left into the Bold Building parking lot. Circle around the playground area to arrive at the drop-off zone with the right side of your car facing the school entrance. After we have helped your child out of the car, please proceed the rest of the way around the playground and then take a right to exit the parking lot and another right to exit onto Moring Drive. One more right on Governors Drive will bring you back to the stop light at Mt. Carmel Church Rd. A map of this route is attached. Please help us minimize our impact on our neighbors by following the directions provided.

We know that drop-off and pick-up times will be busy and will require all of us to work together. Please be aware that everyone will have the same stresses during this time. Being polite and thoughtful with

one another will go a long way toward making this a more comfortable and efficient process, and is a great opportunity to be good role models for our children.

Our first priority during drop-off and pick-up is the safety of all of the children. You can help this process run smoothly and safely by making sure that your child has his/her backpack ready with lunchbox inside and the backpack zipped. If your child needs a coat, he/she should be wearing it before you enter the drop-off zone. Please be sure that your child is sitting on the passenger side of your car so teachers can load and unload more efficiently.

If you have an urgent message or information for your child's teacher at the time of drop-off, please write it in a short note so the teacher can read it after all of the children are safely taken care of. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

AFTERNOON PICK-UP

School dismisses at 3:15 and all children must be picked up by 3:35, unless they are enrolled in the YMCA after-school program. We will provide a window card for each family. Please have that card displayed on your car's dashboard so we can efficiently bring your children out to your car. Please do not park your car to pick up your child.

As with drop-off, our staff will be focused on student safety during the pick-up process. Please do not engage staff members in conversations in the pick-up line. In addition, please make every effort to pick up your child on time. The teachers have a great deal to do to prepare the Montessori classroom for the next day. Please respect their planning and preparation needs with your timely arrival.

LATE ARRIVAL AND EARLY PICK-UP

We appreciate that very occasionally you may be late bringing your child to school. If you arrive after 8:30, please call the school office at 919.240.7787 for admittance to the school. A school staff member will make sure that your child gets to his/her class.

Please make every effort to schedule appointments to avoid early pick-ups from school. In the event an early pick-up is occasionally necessary, please notify the office in advance of the date and time you will need to pick up your child. A school staff member will meet you at the school door to dismiss your child. Please do not plan on an early pick up any later than 2:45.

CHANGE IN PICK-UP PLANS

If someone other than you, or your usual driver, will be picking up your child, you must notify the office with the name, description, and vehicle make of the adult who will be picking up your child. The staff will ask for identification, and your specific permission, before releasing your child to an adult with whom we are not familiar.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Allergies and Chronic Health Conditions

If your child has an allergy of any kind, including food and/or environmental, or a chronic health condition, such as diabetes or asthma, that affects your child's school day, you must inform the Head of

School prior to the first day of school. We must have information regarding the nature and severity of the allergy or health problem, symptoms to be aware of, treatment your child is receiving from a health care professional, and any emergency procedures. The Head of School and School Nurse, in consultation with you and the child's professional health care provider, will complete an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP) and/or Allergy Action Plan (AAP). If needed, the school nurse will provide appropriate training to the faculty and staff regarding the interventions specified in the IHCP and/or AAP. Please see Policies 307.3 and 307.7 in the full set of Student Policies for more information.

Illnesses

To maintain a safe and healthy school environment for all of our students, please respect our Illness policy, which requires temporary exclusion from school when your child has the following conditions:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher (non-medicated)
- Upper respiratory tract infection
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Strep throat
- Conjunctivitis
- Ringworm/pinworm
- Impetigo
- Chicken Pox

Your child may return to school after he/she is symptom free for at least 24 hours with a written note from a parent or doctor. Please see Policy 307.2 in the full set of Student Policies for more information.

If your child becomes sick at school, we will contact you, or your emergency contact if you cannot be reached, to pick up your child immediately. Your child will be separated from other children. If your child is diagnosed with a contagious or communicable disease, please notify the school immediately so that we can inform other parents that their child has been exposed (your child's information will be kept confidential). We are required to notify the Chatham County Public Health Department of any communicable disease.

Medication

If your child will need prescription medication administered at school, please complete a Medication Administration Form, which can be obtained from the School office. Please see Policy 307.6 in the full set of Student Policies for more information.

Immunizations

All children should have a completed immunization record, or valid exemption, on file in the school office prior to enrollment. The school is required to exclude any child who hasn't provided an immunization record or valid exemption within 30 days of the start of school. Please see Policy 307.3 in the full set of Student Policies for more information.

Injury or Accident

Though extremely unlikely, if your child has a serious accident or injury at school, we will call you, or your emergency contact if you cannot be reached, and will administer necessary first aid. If a School staff member determines that your child may need immediate medical treatment, 911 will be called and your child will be taken to the nearest hospital recommended by the emergency medical team.

In the event of a minor accident or injury, a School staff member will administer first aid and give you a written accident report at pick up. A copy of this report will be on file at school.

Weather

We will be going outside every day unless it is raining or the temperature is determined to be too cold. Please be sure that your child comes to school with appropriate clothing for the weather.

Willow Oak Montessori will announce closure due to inclement weather via e-mail and will attempt to notify local television stations. This decision will be made as early as possible, typically by 6:00am. If weather affecting road conditions develops during the school day, please plan to pick your child up immediately. A staff member will remain with any child until he/she is picked up, but please try to arrive as early as possible for the safety of both your child and the staff members remaining with them.

Emergency Procedures

Your child's safety is of utmost importance to us. Our emergency procedures have been discussed with the Chatham County Fire Marshall's office, and we will have regular emergency practice drills for fire, tornado, and lock-down situations, so that each child knows what to expect in the event of a real emergency. Evacuation plans are posted at each exit. In the event of a real emergency, we will contact all parents as soon as possible.

Snack and Lunch

Each child will be asked to bring a snack and lunch to school each day. Food choices should be healthy, nutritious, and contain minimal sugar. The best drink to provide for your child is water. We will not have the ability to heat meals, nor the space for refrigerating food. Please add an ice pack to your child's lunch bag, as needed.

Children between the ages of six and nine really enjoy making food choices and preparing food. With healthy guidelines such as whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and a protein (a hardboiled egg, lean turkey or chicken, hummus, tofu, cheese, or plain non sugar yogurt), your child will enjoy packing his or her own lunch the night before and will be learning healthy habits which will last a life time. Pre-packaged foods may appear convenient, but they are generally not a good nutritional value. Plain yogurt with a spoonful of homemade applesauce (yes, your child will enjoy making this too) put into a container that your child can reuse is not only economical, but is also fun for your child to put together. Please be sure that your child can open all containers independently. Be creative, have fun, and share your ideas with us and one another!

Knowing that children learn best when they have eaten enough healthy food, Willow Oak Montessori recognizes that there will occasionally be a need to offer students healthy food choices to supplement lunch brought from home or to provide a healthy snack. The school will maintain a supply of healthy

food choices that can be offered to students when the need arises. See Policy 307.10 in the full set of Student Policies for more information.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Clothing

Children generally love picking out their own clothes and outfits. Given some guidance about weather and maybe limiting choices can be a fun way for your child to express his or her creativity. Help your child choose an outfit which is comfortable, appropriate for outside play, and which can get dirty.

As we will have physical activity and play every day, children will need close-toed shoes that are safe and comfortable. In the classroom, children may wear their regular shoes, remove their shoes, or have inside shoes to wear. Each child will, however, need to be able to store any additional shoes in his or her backpack and take off and put on shoes independently. Please save sandals, flip-flops, and dress shoes for times outside of school.

Toys, Jewelry, Watches, Money, and Electronics

Everything your child will need for a successful school day will be in the classroom. Please do not let your child bring toys, money, or any kind of electronics, including cell phones, to school. Jewelry often becomes a toy or object of distraction for children, so please use your best judgment about your child's ability to wear jewelry in the intended way.

If your child would like to bring a special book or object of interest which fits with the curriculum, he/she may bring this to class to share and leave on a shelf for a few days.

CHILDREN'S WORK

In a Montessori classroom, much of the work a child completes is done with manipulative materials rather than paper and pencil. However, when your child does record his/her work in this way, he/she will have the option of bringing it home to share with you. This is the child's choice and he/she will use his/her backpack to bring work home.

Each child will be creating a portfolio of his/her work with assistance from the teacher. These portfolios will be an important component of Parent-Teacher Conferences and will give you the opportunity to see, in a very concrete way, the progress your child has been making. Of course, if you ever have questions about your child's work or performance in the classroom, please be in touch with your child's teacher. Email is the best form of contact.

ASSESSMENTS

Willow Oak is required to administer some formal assessments, including the North Carolina EOG (End of Grade) tests. It is our intention to keep these to the minimum required, and to provide our students with the necessary supports to participate with a minimum of stress. We will always inform you well in advance when your child is being given a formal assessment tool. All results will be shared with you.

Formal assessments, however, are only one way of gathering information about the progress of each student. Montessori teachers use a form of teaching that is based on constant observation of each

student. The teacher is therefore constantly receiving information about which material to use with a child, how to present it for optimum success, and what lesson to give when. He/she is also able to see in a very specific way where a child may be stuck and need additional support to master a concept or goal. This informal assessment is a constant feedback loop that allows each child to learn, practice, and master everything he/she needs to grow. Your child's teachers will share their observations regarding your child's development in all areas at fall and spring parent conferences.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

A birthday is very important to children and we have a special way of honoring the birthday child in the Montessori elementary classroom. Several days before your child's birthday, your teacher will contact you about anything that is needed for the special day.

Holidays are an opportunity for learning about traditions and the history of various cultures. We will always recognize and respect the diversity of cultural traditions as we honor and celebrate a variety of holidays and special days. We welcome these as times that parents can share their knowledge and experience with the class. Please let your teacher know if you would like to be a part of sharing with our children.

We also love having parents share special talents, interests, travel stories and such with the children. If you would like an opportunity to be a "visiting teacher" please let your teacher know about your area of expertise so we can schedule this.

We may go on a variety of educational field trips during the year and will ask for help with the organizing of dates and travel. Parent volunteers will provide transportation (with completion of all necessary paperwork) and each child will have to use a seat belt, booster seat, or car seat, as required. You will be given information about any class trip with plenty of notice about specifics.

THE MONTESSORI WAY

A Montessori school and classroom is a special and unique classroom environment. Not only is the classroom specially designed and prepared to meet the developmental needs of each and every child, but the teacher is also specially educated and experienced in meeting the needs of each. The Montessori way of education has a long history. Much research has been done over the past 15 years, in particular, that demonstrates the wide variety of benefits that an authentic Montessori education provides.

At the heart of each and every interaction with children is respect. Children are treated as the unique individuals they are, they are spoken to in a manner which honors them as "real" people, and are given the structure, support, and appropriate freedom that meets their developmental needs. Dr. Montessori taught that this "structured freedom" is what allows each child to become responsible, self-disciplined, and able to solve problems and think creatively.

Montessori provides children with a peaceful environment that models respectful interactions, and the use of a calm and supportive manner with one another. Conflicts between children are an opportunity for each child to learn and practice compromise and the resolution of problems in a respectful way.

It is important that children learn cause and effect through logical, natural consequences. However, these must always be based on sound child development and be appropriate to the child and the

situation. Montessori teachers do not use any kind of punishment, ridicule, sarcasm, teasing, bullying, or harsh tones with students. If a child needs to be separated from an activity, it will be in the classroom, with appropriate supervision, and for a brief duration. The child will be able to discuss alternatives and ways to learn from any problem that may arise.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Our teachers are specially trained professionals who are responsive to your child's development. You are a critical source of information that helps us help your child, and it is this "team approach" that makes a Montessori education such a rich experience for you and your child.

As part of this team, teachers will openly share concerns regarding your child's development and success in the classroom with you as soon as concerns might arise. This is a give and take endeavor, however, and we need you to share your concerns, questions, and comments with us. Please share any events or life changes that may have an impact on your child. Let us know if you feel that your child is dealing with an unusual stress or will need extra support from the teacher or school for any reason.

To be in touch with your child's teacher, please use his/her email address rather than a phone call during the school day. If you have a question or concern, please be in touch with the teacher while the issue is still a small one. There are no "dumb" questions, and if you have a worry or concern, we want to talk with you about it before it gets so big that you are really upset. The best first place to start when you need information about the classroom is with the teacher.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

We want you to be informed about what is happening at school. There are a variety of ways we will stay in touch.

Each classroom will send out occasional emails to let you know what has been happening in the classroom and what is planned going forward. As new topics, new materials, and new projects are added, you will know. Periodic school-wide newsletters will share information regarding Willow Oak events, dates, and important information. Finally, the school maintains a Facebook page, which we encourage you to follow.

The school will host Parent Partnership Nights throughout the year to share what is special about Montessori education, show you some "works," and give you time for questions and answers.

OBSERVATIONS

Once the school year has settled in, we strongly encourage you to schedule an observation in your child's classroom. You can read about Montessori and hear people talk about it, but actually seeing it in action is the very best way to learn what it is all about. It can be really fun and informative to observe several times over the course of the school year to see how the community dynamic changes and how the curriculum expands as the children's abilities and knowledge expand.

To schedule an observation, please contact your child's teacher and he/she will get you on the calendar.

CLASSROOM GRIEVANCES

If you have made contact with your child's teachers, but feel that you need further clarification, a meeting can be scheduled for afternoons after 3:45. While the teachers will always strive to fully resolve all issues, if your concerns are not met to your satisfaction, you may request a meeting with the Director of Curriculum & Instruction and the teachers. If need be, the Head of School can be involved in any discussion.

It is our intention and commitment to work with you to provide the best Montessori education for your child. We all share a common goal - serving the needs of your child.

SCHOOL GRIEVANCE POLICY

For questions regarding school policies, procedures and administrative matters, please contact the Head of School. In the event that he/she is unable to resolve your questions or concerns, you may escalate your concerns via the School's Grievance Process located in Addendum I to the Student Policies.

Please Note: This Quick Reference Handbook was developed to assist parents in quickly accessing key information about our program. It does not replace our full set of student policies, which can be found on our website at charter.willowoakmontessori.org.

Willow Oak Montessori: A Public Charter School

2014-2015 Academic Calendar

- H = Holidays, No School
- W = Teacher Workdays, No School
- ER = Early Release, 12noon Dismissal
- C = Parent Conferences, No School
- @ = First and Last Days of School
- * = Parent/Community Event
- * = Possible Weather Make-Up Days

July 2014						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	H	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

4 Independence Day Holiday

August 2014						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	W	W	W	16
17	W	W	W	W	W	23
24	@	26	27	28	29	30
31						

13-22 Teacher Workdays
21 Teacher Meet&Greet
(5-6:30pm)
25 First Day of School

September 2014						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	H	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	W	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

1 Labor Day Holiday
3 Parent Partnership Night (6:30pm)
8 Beginning of Grade 3 Reading Test
19 Teacher Workday

October 2014						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	C	W	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

1 Parent Partnership (6:30pm)
6-22 Parent Observations
23 Parent Conferences
24 Teacher Workday

November 2014						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	H	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	H	H	H	29
30						

5 Parent Partnership (6:30pm)
11 Veteran's Day Holiday
26-28 Thanksgiving Holiday

December 2014						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	ER	20
21	H	H	H	H	H	27
28	H	H	H			

17 Children's Morning
19 Early Release (12 noon)
22-31 Winter Break Holiday

January 2015						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				H	W	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	H	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

1 Winter Break Holiday
2 Teacher Workday
7 Parent Partnership (6:30pm)
19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

February 2015						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	C	14
15	W	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

13 Parent Conferences
16 Teacher Workday*

March 2015						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	W	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

4 Parent Partnership (6:30pm)
16 Teacher Workday*

April 2015						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	H	4
5	H	H	H	H	H	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	W	28	29	30		

3-10 Spring Break
17 Children's Morning
27 Teacher Workday*

May 2015						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	H	26	27	28	29	30
31						

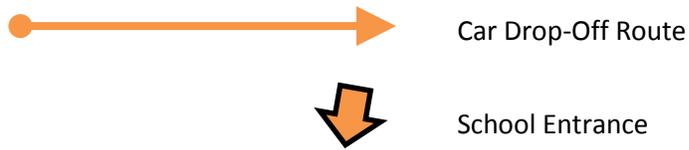
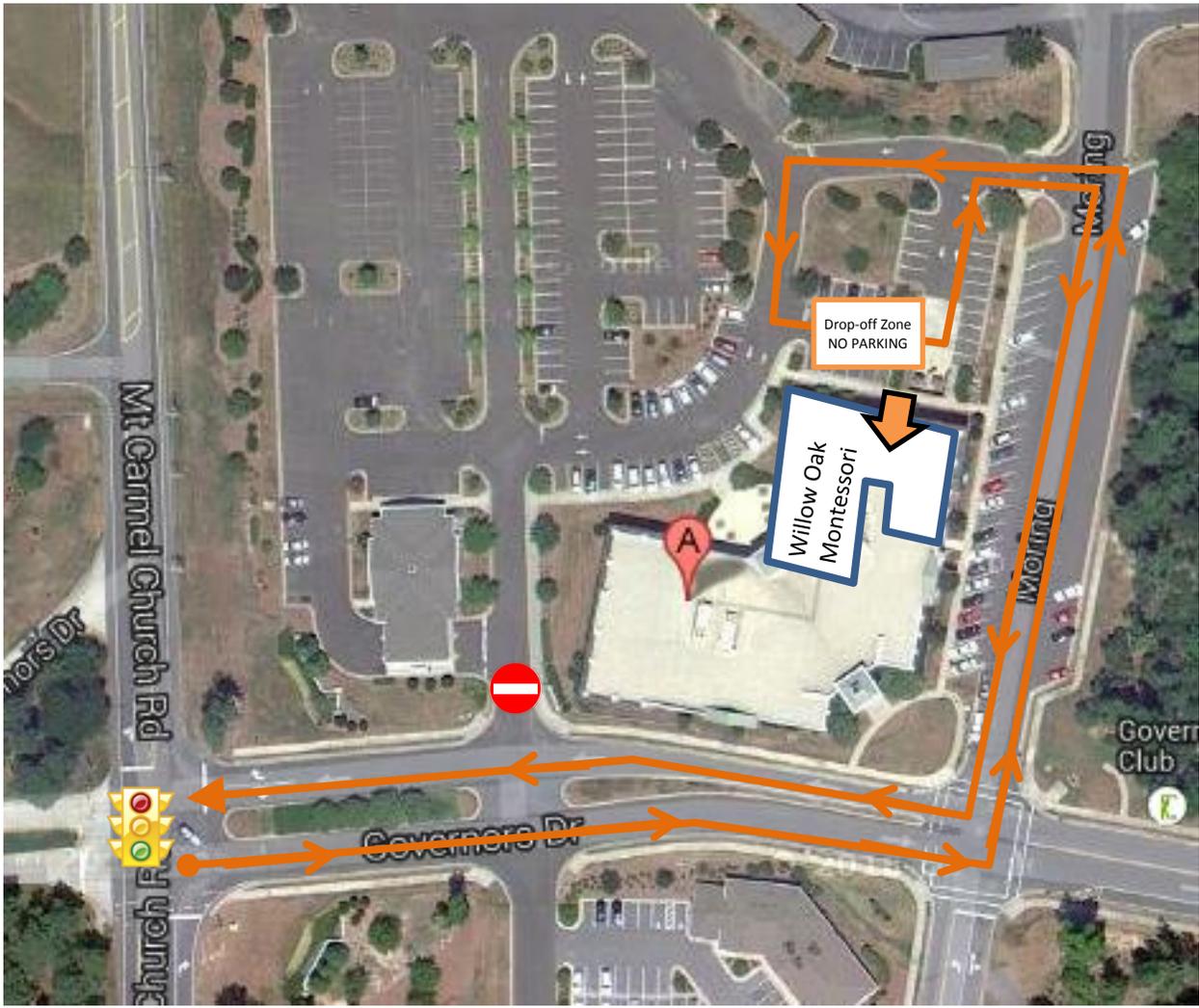
6 Parent Partnership (6:30pm)
25 Memorial Day Holiday
28-29 End of Grade Testing
(3rd/4th Grade Only)

June 2015						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	@	ER	W	W	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

9 Rising Up Ceremony (3rd Grade)
10 Last Day of School/
Early Release (12 noon)
11-12 Teacher Workdays*

Willow Oak Montessori: A Public Charter School

Drop-off Traffic Flow (8:10-8:30am)



Willow Oak Montessori: A Public Charter School

Pick-up Traffic Flow (3:15-3:35pm)

