



Welcome to The Magnolia Schoolhouse!

Welcome, Magnolia Families! We are so excited to begin another year with your family.

This handbook explains how Magnolia operates, why we do what we do, and how we can work together to give your Learner the most beautiful experience possible. Please take the time to read it in its entirety. We know it contains a lot of information, but it will answer most of your questions and help your family participate fully in everything we have planned.

I was raised surrounded by Italian Nonnas who expressed love by making sure the people in their care had everything they could possibly need—usually before anyone thought to ask. They fed you, prepared for you, worried about you, welcomed you, and sent you out into the world knowing that someone had considered every detail.

The Nonna Way means making sure every child arrives feeling expected, welcomed, known, and ready for the day ahead. A Nonna would never send you out into the world hungry, wearing the wrong shoes, and without a spare pair of pants. She would also check your pockets before you left—although probably for completely different reasons.

First-Day Checklist

- ☐ All required forms are completed and returned.
- ☐ My Learner has at least one complete change of clothing in one labeled zip-top bag.
- ☐ My Learner is wearing closed-toed sneakers with socks and can manage them independently.
- ☐ My Learner has brought a beautiful potted plant in a pot with a tray.
- ☐ My Learner has a lunch bag with a strap—no backpack.
- ☐ Toys, cards, games, trinkets, stuffed animals, and other treasures are at home.
- ☐ My Learner ate before arriving.
- ☐ My Learner has a healthy snack and nourishing lunch that comply with Magnolia's allergy list and food policies.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival and dismissal should feel calm, welcoming, safe, and efficient. Our car line allows Learners to begin and end their day with confidence while allowing our Educational Guides to remain focused on the children and the work of the program.

Arrival and dismissal take place at the **South Gate**. Please follow the circle, form two lanes, and remain in your vehicle unless an Educational Guide directs you otherwise.

Arrival: 8:50–9:00 a.m.

The gate opens at **8:50 a.m.**, and our day begins at **9:00 a.m.**

An Educational Guide will open your car door, greet your Learner, and welcome them onto campus. Please remain in your vehicle and pull away once your Learner is safely through the gate so the line can continue moving.

Before 8:50 a.m., our Educational Guides are preparing the environments, coordinating the day, and meeting together. Please wait until the gate opens and an Educational Guide is present before allowing your Learner to leave the car.

An Educational Guide will remain at the gate until approximately **9:10 a.m.** If you arrive after the gate has closed, simply call or text the school phone at **772-269-5057**, and someone will come welcome your Learner inside.

We know how difficult it can be to get children out the door—especially when younger siblings, babies, missing shoes, unexpected emotions, and the general unpredictability of family mornings are involved. Lateness happens. There is no judgment and no need to arrive carrying worry or stress with you. We are genuinely happy to see your Learner whenever they arrive.

At the same time, arriving by 9:00 whenever possible makes a meaningful difference. It allows your Learner to experience the opening of the day, settle into the environment alongside everyone else, and feel connected to the rhythm of the community.

They are not academically “behind” when they arrive late. They may simply feel as though the day began without them—and sometimes the antipasti is the best part of the meal.

Like a Nonna, we can step away from the kitchen stove only so many times before the sauce burns. Dinner begins on time, but the feast lasts for hours—and there will always be a place waiting for your Learner at the table.

A Confident Goodbye

Please do not park and walk your Learner to the gate or ask to accompany them to their classroom. Pull through the car line, remain in your vehicle, and allow an Educational

Guide to welcome your Learner out of the car. This is not meant to be cold or unwelcoming. Quite the opposite.

There is tremendous confidence in walking through the gate, joining the community, and getting oneself settled for the day. When Parents show their Learners that they trust their abilities and feel confident leaving them in our care, children often borrow that confidence and carry it through the gate with them.

Children also tend to mirror our uncertainty. Long, worried goodbyes can unintentionally tell a child that there may be something to worry about. So, offer a cheerful goodbye, tell them you love them, and show them that you know they can do this. If you need to cry in the car afterward, we completely understand. Just wait until the door closes and we have escorted your Learner away. We promise not to judge from the gate.

If a Learner needs help finding their classroom or settling into the morning, Educational Guides and our older Learners are there to support them. These small opportunities allow children to rely upon themselves and one another, strengthening both independence and community.

Limiting Parent access during arrival also helps us protect the safety of the campus. We carefully monitor which adults are present while Learners are here, and arrival cannot become an open-campus period during which many adults are moving toward different classrooms. Please do not park, walk to the gate, or ask to enter the classroom during arrival. Trust the car line. It is quick, cheerful, and designed to make separation easier—not longer.

When a Learner Is Having a Difficult Morning

Occasionally, a Learner may be having big feelings and be unable or unwilling to leave the car when you reach the front of the line. That is okay. Please do not feel pressured to complete a tearful separation while two lanes of cars wait behind you. An Educational Guide may ask you to pull around to the **North Gate**, where you and your Learner can have a little more time and privacy. Once the main arrival rush has slowed, an Educational Guide will walk over to the North Gate and welcome your Learner onto campus.

This protects the flow of arrival while giving the child who is struggling the time and space to feel what they are feeling. It also allows the Learners who are happily entering through the South Gate to enjoy that excitement without becoming worried or feeling that they must immediately take care of a friend who is upset. Once the Learner enters the campus, their friends and Educational Guides can help them reconnect with the community and begin the day.

Dismissal: 3:00 p.m.

Dismissal begins promptly at **3:00 p.m.**

Please enter through the circle, form two lanes, and pull forward as far as possible to the first cone. We can generally fit six to eight cars near the gate at one time, allowing our Educational Guides to bring several Learners safely to their vehicles. Please remain in your car. An Educational Guide will bring your Learner to you and assist them as needed.

Learners will remain safely inside the gate until an Educational Guide escorts them to their car. Once all Learners and Educational Guides are safely out of the driving lanes, you will be given the **all clear** to leave the circle. Please do not pull away before the all clear, even if your Learner is already safely inside your vehicle. Other Learners or Educational Guides may still be walking between the two lanes where they cannot easily be seen. Once the all clear is given, please pull away promptly so the next group of cars can move forward.

Early Pickups, Late Arrivals & Changes in Pickup

If your Learner will be arriving after the gate closes or leaving early, please text or call the school phone at **772-269-5057** when you arrive. Someone will meet you at the gate or bring your Learner to you.

If someone other than the person who normally picks up your Learner will be arriving, please send the change by **email to Tara and Ashley C**, or by **text to the school phone**. Include the person's full name and any helpful identifying information if they are not a member of our community. If they are going home with a member of our community, please just send us a quick text or email letting us know.. no need to a lengthy description.

Please send changes as early as possible. We understand that genuine last-minute changes happen, but advance notice gives us time to communicate with the appropriate Educational Guides and prepare your Learner without creating confusion during dismissal. Simply send a quick text and we will reply with a confirmation.

For safety, we will not release a Learner to someone we have not been authorized to release them to.

Heavy Rain & Lightning

If it is raining heavily or there is lightning nearby, arrival and dismissal procedures will change slightly.

Please form **one car line** rather than two and pull forward to the **Market door** one vehicle at a time. An Educational Guide will receive or bring your Learner to the car as safely as possible.

Florida weather occasionally arrives with opinions, so please bring a little additional patience. The process may take longer when we are moving one car and one Learner at a time, but everyone's safety will remain our priority.

The Goal

Our goal is not to rush families through arrival and dismissal. It is to create a process that is welcoming, predictable, safe, and respectful of everyone's time. A cheerful goodbye helps Learners begin with confidence. A calm pickup helps them end feeling secure. The car line allows us to provide both—while keeping the sauce from burning.

Communication Guidelines

We are so excited to begin this school year together.

Open communication is important to us, and we want you to know how to reach the right person when you need something. At the same time, our priority during program hours is to remain fully present with the Learners.

To help us balance both, we have created a few simple communication guidelines.

The Magnolia Schoolhouse Phone

772-269-5057

This is now our primary school phone for current Magnolia families.

This is an important change for returning families who are accustomed to contacting Tara directly on her personal cell phone. We made this change because the school phone remains on campus and will always be in the care of an adult during program hours. That means someone can respond promptly even when Tara is meeting with a Learner, away from campus, or otherwise unavailable.

Please save **772-269-5057** in your phone as **The Magnolia Schoolhouse** and give it a distinctive ringtone. If you see this number during the school day, please answer promptly. It means someone from Magnolia needs to reach you regarding your Learner.

The school phone should be used for time-sensitive matters during program hours, including:

- You have arrived late and the gate is closed.
- You are picking up your Learner early and have arrived at the gate.
- There is an unexpected change in the person picking up your Learner.
- An accident, delay, or family emergency will affect pickup.
- You are at the locked gate and need assistance.
- Ground Control needs to reach you regarding your Learner.
- You need to communicate something that cannot reasonably wait for an email response.

For a change in pickup, please include the authorized person's full name and any helpful identifying information. We may request identification before releasing a Learner.

This number is for **currently enrolled Magnolia families** and matters concerning Learners while they are participating in the program. Please do not give the school phone number to prospective families or use it as a general-inquiry number. If you are referring a new family to Magnolia, you are welcome to give them Tara's cell phone number so they can reach her directly.

Learner Phones & Smartwatches

Learners may not bring cell phones, Apple Watches, smartwatches, or other personal electronic devices onto the Magnolia campus.

Devices may not remain powered off in a lunch bag, tucked into a pocket, or brought “just in case.” A powered-off phone is still a phone; placing it beside a sandwich does not make it lunch.

Learners will always be permitted to contact home when they genuinely need to. They may ask an Educational Guide or Ground Control for help calling a Parent from the Magnolia phone. Parents may also call or text 772-269-5057 whenever a time-sensitive message needs to reach their Learner.

If a device is discovered on campus, it will be secured and returned directly to the Parent at dismissal. If a Learner uses or conceals a device, refuses to surrender it, or repeatedly brings one to Magnolia, Ground Control will contact the Parent so we can address the concern together. Please see our complete **Screen-Free Childhood & Devices Policy** for the philosophy behind Magnolia’s commitment to a screen-free childhood.

Tara’s Personal Cell Phone

Many Magnolia families have Tara’s personal cell phone number, and that is not changing. Magnolia is a community where school relationships often become genuine friendships. Our children play together, our families see one another outside the program, and sometimes you may simply want to send a funny picture, share something personal, or ask whether we are meeting at the beach. Please continue to reach out as you normally would.

This is not an attempt to separate our community into “school families” and “friends.” Many of you are both, and we are grateful for that. We simply need to give routine school business a proper place to land so it can be seen, remembered, and handled by the right person—even when Tara is not the person holding the school phone that day.

Questions about T-shirts, calendars, lunches, paperwork, events, tuition, classroom matters, or other Magnolia business should be sent by email rather than by personal text, particularly during evenings and weekends.

At 3:00 on a Sunday afternoon, a Nonna is likely standing over a pot of sauce while everyone she loves gathers around the table. She absolutely wants to hear that your child said something hilarious. She may even want to see seventeen pictures from the beach. What she probably does not need at that exact moment is a question about whether the olive-green Magnolia shirt is available in a youth medium.

Send that question to Ground Control by email. It will be safely waiting for us on the next program day, when we can answer it without burning the sauce, neglecting the pasta, or making the entire family wait while we search through a T-shirt box.

Please continue to reach out personally when the communication is personal. For Magnolia business, email gives your message a reliable home and allows Tara’s personal phone—and Sunday dinner—to remain personal.

Email for All Non-Urgent Communication

For everything that does not require an immediate response during the school day, please use email. At a minimum, include **Ground Control** on school-related communication. You are also welcome—and often encouraged—to include your Learner's Educational Guides when the message concerns the classroom, your Learner's experience, or something the classroom team should know.

Including Ground Control helps ensure that communication does not sit unread if an Educational Guide is absent, focused on the Learners, or unable to respond immediately. It also allows us to support the Educational Guides and maintain awareness of matters affecting the program.

Email is appropriate for:

- Reporting an absence for any reason, including illness, vacation, appointments, or a family day
- Sharing information that may help us support your Learner
- Asking questions about classroom routines, curriculum, projects, or events
- Sharing ideas, resources, or opportunities for the Learners
- Expressing interest in visiting, presenting, or contributing to the program
- Discussing a social concern or conflict involving your Learner
- Requesting a phone call, conference, or in-person meeting
- Asking questions about paperwork, tuition, Step Up, T-shirts, schedules, or other administrative matters

No explanation is required when reporting an absence, although advance notice helps us plan for the day...as we often plan for each Learner every day.

When writing about a conflict between Learners, please share calm, specific, factual information that will help us understand and address what happened. We are incredibly fortunate to have a community filled with wonderful children—each with a distinct personality, a developing perspective, and the occasional ability to describe the same playground disagreement in a completely different way.

Our Learners are still learning how to communicate clearly, understand another person's intentions, manage strong feelings, repair misunderstandings, and make better choices. Even a Nonna knows that when two cousins come running into the kitchen to report an argument, there will somehow be at least three versions of the story.

We do not label or villainize children. We listen, gather the necessary information, and treat conflict as an opportunity to guide everyone involved. Please tell us what your Learner experienced and what concerns you, while leaving room for us to understand the whole situation and support each child with fairness, kindness, and care.

When Email Is Checked

Educational Guides will check their email before the gates open each morning, and again at the end of the day. Once the Learners arrive, phones and laptops are put away and their full attention belongs to the children. They may not have an opportunity to

respond to a message until the following program morning. This does not mean the message is being ignored. It means they are doing exactly what we have asked them to do: remain present with the Learners and spend their time creating meaningful learning experiences.

Ground Control remains reachable throughout the day through the school phone at **772-269-5057**. If something cannot wait until an Educational Guide checks email again, please contact the school phone during program hours.

In-Person Conversations

We love greeting Parents and Learners during arrival and dismissal. Brief, important messages may be shared at the car, particularly when they help us support your Learner that day. A scraped knee, a minor mishap with a hot-glue gun, or a lovely report about what a wonderful friend your child was that afternoon can usually be communicated quickly at pickup.

Anything sensitive, complicated, confidential, or likely to require more than a brief exchange deserves its own conversation. Please do not attempt to hold an impromptu conference while two lanes of cars wait behind you and an Educational Guide is trying to determine whether everyone has received the correct child. We are always happy to schedule a phone call or an in-person meeting at a time when everyone involved can give the matter the attention it deserves.

Availability & Response Times

Our regular availability is:

Monday-Thursday, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

You may send an email whenever it is convenient for you. Messages sent outside our availability hours will be answered on the next program day.

Texts to the school phone are reserved for time-sensitive matters during program hours. School-related messages should not be sent to personal cell phones during evenings or weekends. We understand that a question may enter your mind at 10:00 p.m. You are welcome to email it before it escapes (though we do love the “scheduled send” function on email). We simply will not pursue it into the night wearing pajamas and carrying a laptop.

Staying Connected

Healthy communication boundaries are not intended to make Magnolia less personal. They allow us to remain deeply connected while ensuring that the adults caring for your children are rested, prepared, and fully present when the gates open each morning. Thank you for helping us give every message—and every Learner—the attention they deserve.



The Magnolia Schoolhouse

Who we are and how to reach us

GROUND CONTROL

Administration

Tara Famularo-Del Bianco

Founder & Director

Tara@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Michael Del Bianco

Founder & Director of Operations

Michael@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Ashley Conard

Assistant Director

AshleyC@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

THE COMMONS

Upper Elementary & Middle School

Mary Brough

Educational Guide

Mary@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Jennifer Wood

Educational Guide

Jennifer@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Kim Smith

Educational Guide

Kim@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

THE GROVE

Lower Elementary

Regina "Gina" Wells

Educational Guide

Gina@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Ashley Reyes

Educational Guide

Ashley@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Michael Del Bianco

Support Guide

Michael@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

THE GREENHOUSE

Primary

Sandy Hamrick

Educational Guide

Sandy@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Nelly Orellana

Educational Guide

Nelly@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Randi Murdough

Support Guide

Randi@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

THE WORKSHOPS

Gerald Roy

Science

Grldroy@aol.com

Adam Conard

Art

Adam@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Jazmin Leferva

Spanish

Jazmin@themagnoliaschoolhouse.com

Heather Reeb

Reading Tutor

Heather_reeb@me.com

Dress Code

Why We Have a Dress Code

Our dress code is intended to make mornings simpler, support independence, reduce distractions, and help create the calm, beautiful, cohesive environment we want our Learners to experience.

Children move constantly throughout the day. They sit on the floor, work in the gardens, run through the Field, create art, cook, build, climb, and occasionally return home carrying enough sand to establish a small private beach. Their clothing should allow them to participate fully without worrying about ruining something fancy or being unable to move comfortably.

A consistent dress code also creates a sense of community. Learners remain wonderfully individual, but their clothing does not need to compete for attention with their personalities, their work, or the prepared environment. We promise to give them many more meaningful ways to express who they are.

Shirts

Learners should wear a **Magnolia school shirt each program day**. School shirts are available in several approved colors and may be ordered here:

[Order Magnolia School Shirts](#)

Please order at least one olive-green Magnolia shirt for your Learner to wear on special school days.

We also understand that laundry occasionally stages a rebellion. If all of the Magnolia shirts are waiting impatiently in the washing machine, your Learner may wear a plain black or plain white T-shirt for the day.

Please reserve plain black and white shirts for those occasional laundry emergencies rather than using them as the regular uniform.

Bottoms

Learners may wear solid shorts, pants, skirts, or skorts in neutral or muted colors. Bottoms should be comfortable, modest, and easy to move in.

Please avoid:

- Bright colors
- Busy patterns
- Characters or pictures
- Large logos or brand names

- Writing or slogans
- Clothing that restricts movement or prevents comfortable participation

Learners should be able to sit on the floor, run, climb, garden, create, and move through the day comfortably.

Shoes

Closed-toed sneakers with socks are required every day.

Our campus includes concrete, soil, sand, rocks, gardens, wooded areas, sticks, roots, and several other forms of terrain that seem determined to come home inside everyone's shoes. Sneakers offer the safest and most practical option for moving across all of it.

If your Learner cannot yet tie their own shoes, please send them in Velcro or slip-on sneakers that they can manage independently. We are happy to work on shoe-tying skills in other ways, but getting ready to move through the day should not require an adult wrestling match with six complicated shoelaces.

Please avoid high-top sneakers or other shoes that are difficult for your Learner to put on and remove independently.

Crocs, sandals, flip-flops, dress shoes, and open-toed shoes are not permitted.

Outerwear

Because Florida gives us approximately thirteen minutes of actual winter, we do not want families spending unnecessary money on outerwear that may be worn for only a short part of the year.

When possible, we request solid sweatshirts or jackets in:

- Black
- White
- Sage
- Olive green
- Pale pink

This helps maintain a calm, cohesive community appearance and looks lovely in photographs. However, the requested colors are a preference rather than a requirement. Please use what your Learner already owns before purchasing something they may wear for one chilly month and then outgrow by the time Florida remembers winter again.

Outerwear must remain free from characters, large pictures, prominent brand names, slogans, sports teams, and busy or distracting designs. Magnolia outerwear may also be available through our local producer.

Accessories & Hair

Please leave hats, sunglasses, watches, valuable jewelry, distracting accessories, unnatural hair colors, and artificial hair extensions at home. These items can easily

become distractions and are frequently lost, compared, broken, or handled by other Learners.

This is not intended to discourage individuality. It simply helps us maintain the calm, cohesive environment we want our Learners to experience.

Besides, Nonna's house has so many interesting things, always has everything they need, and loves you for just being you...the same concept exists for Magnolia.

A Change of Clothing

Every Learner should keep a complete change of clothing at Magnolia in a **labeled gallon-size zip-top bag**. Younger Learners should have two complete changes of clothing available.

We work outside, go into the rain, create freely, and get wonderfully messy. A change of clothing is not only for bathroom accidents; it may be needed after mud, paint, water, food, gardening, or an unexpectedly enthusiastic encounter with the natural world.

Everything must be labeled with your Learner's name. Clothing without a name has a remarkable ability to deny ever having belonged to anyone. Pretty, pretty please—with a cherry on top—label your child's clothing, lunch box, water bottle, and containers. Though we love a good auction, we would much rather spend car line chatting with you than holding up the latest unclaimed stainless-steel container while every family insists they have never seen it before. Without a name, we can only assume it arrived from an alien spaceship, and aliens have proven remarkably unreliable about collecting their belongings from Lost and Found.

Greenhouse Learners should also keep a full rain suit at Magnolia. Grove Learners may keep one here as well, particularly if changing independently is difficult or they enjoy playing in the rain but prefer not to spend the remainder of the day completely soaked if they do not have a change of clothing.

The Simple Version

Each morning, please send your Learner dressed in:

- A Magnolia school shirt
- Solid, neutral or muted bottoms
- Closed-toed sneakers
- Socks
- Clothing that allows them to move, work, play, and learn independently

Thank you for helping us keep mornings easier, our environment calmer, and our Learners ready for every beautiful—and occasionally muddy—part of the day.

"Any child who is self-sufficient, who can tie his shoes, dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity which is derived from a sense of independence."— Maria Montessori

Progress and Partnership

We know that choosing a homeschool enrichment program requires tremendous trust. You are entrusting us with an important part of your Learner's childhood, and we want you to have a meaningful understanding of what they are experiencing, how they are growing, and what we are building together.

At the same time, we have learned that more communication is not always better communication. A long weekly email filled with photographs, reflections, announcements, reminders, recaps, and seventeen other things may contain wonderful information—but it may also become the digital equivalent of a seven-layer lasagna. There is a great deal to enjoy, but it is not always easy to find the one date you were actually looking for.

This year, we are simplifying the way information is shared so that important details are easier to find and our longer reflections can be enjoyed when you have the time and interest to read them.

Weekly Dates & Photographs

Each week, Parents will receive a short, simple email containing:

- Important upcoming dates
- Time-sensitive reminders
- A link to photographs from that week

That is it.

The goal is to create an email that can be opened quickly, understood easily, and found again when someone suddenly asks, "Wait—when is that event?"

We take many photographs because we love giving Parents a window into the joy, work, friendships, discoveries, and occasional magnificent messes that fill our days. The weekly link will allow you to enjoy those photographs without requiring them to be embedded inside a lengthy newsletter.

Please take a moment to review the weekly dates, even if you do not have time to look through every photograph. We promise not to be offended if you do not admire all 146 pictures of children deeply concentrating on something wonderful—although we may have admired every one.

Updates & Reflections

Program updates, classroom recaps, and reflections about what we are doing and why will be sent separately on a regular basis. These will not follow a required weekly or monthly schedule. We will send them when there is something meaningful to explain, celebrate, reflect upon, or share with our community.

Separating these reflections from the weekly dates allows Parents to read them when they have the time and desire to do so, without searching through several paragraphs to discover whether Magnolia is closed next Monday.

Important, time-sensitive information will always be communicated clearly and directly. Our reflections are an invitation into the deeper life and philosophy of the program—not homework for Parents.

Seasonal Learner Reports

Parents will receive **three individual reports** about their Learner during the school year:

- **Fall Report — November**
- **Winter Report — February**
- **Spring Report — End of the School Year**

These reports will focus solely on your Learner. They may include observations about academic development, interests, participation, independence, social and emotional growth, classroom adjustment, areas of strength, and places where additional support or practice may be helpful.

Our reports are intended to provide a thoughtful picture of the whole child—not simply a list of completed skills or a collection of numbers. Children do not develop in straight lines, and growth does not always arrive according to the schedule printed on a calendar.

Sometimes the most meaningful progress is immediately visible. Sometimes it is quietly growing beneath the surface, much like a Nonna's sauce that appears to be doing absolutely nothing until you realize it has somehow become magnificent.

If an important concern arises, we will not wait for the next seasonal report to communicate with you. Likewise, Parents never need to wait for a report or scheduled conference to ask a question or request a conversation.

Parent-Educational Guide Conferences

Formal conferences provide time for Parents and Educational Guides to step away from the movement of the school day and speak thoughtfully about each Learner. These conversations are intended to be collaborative. They allow us to share observations, listen to the Parent's perspective, celebrate growth, discuss concerns, consider goals, and identify ways we can support the Learner together.

Conference dates will appear on the Magnolia calendar. Approximately one month beforehand, Parents will receive an email with a Google sign-up sheet to select an available time.

Greenhouse Conferences

Greenhouse families will have one formal conference in **January** with their Learner's Educational Guides.

Greenhouse Learners are welcome to attend alongside their Parents. If the Educational Guides believe a conversation is needed sooner, or if a Parent would like to meet before January, an additional conversation may be scheduled.

Parents of Kindergarten Learners who will be moving into the Grove will also have an **end-of-year transition conference**. This conference will take place on the same day as the End-of-Year Portfolio Open House and will give Parents and Educational Guides an opportunity to discuss the Learner's growth, readiness, strengths, support needs, and upcoming transition into Lower Elementary.

Moving from the Greenhouse into the Grove is an exciting step. A little conversation beforehand helps everyone know what to expect—and keeps the transition from feeling as though someone simply woke up one morning and transplanted the child into an entirely different garden.

Grove & Commons Conferences

Grove and Commons families will have one formal **Parent-only conference before Thanksgiving break**.

In previous years, conferences were held during Thanksgiving week. We discovered that many families travel during

Food Policy

Food, Nutrition & Mealtimes

Food Is Part of the Education

At the core of Magnolia is our commitment to the health and well-being of every Learner. Food affects how children feel, grow, focus, regulate themselves, and participate in the day. A hungry child may appear distracted, emotional, tired, or uninterested when the actual problem is considerably simpler: the child needs to eat.

We want Learners to develop a genuine love of natural foods, an appreciation for home-prepared meals, curiosity about unfamiliar ingredients, and the confidence to nourish themselves throughout their lives.

Food is not merely fuel that gets children through the academic portion of the day. It is culture, science, history, practical life, health, pleasure, generosity, and one of the oldest ways human beings build community.

Or, as a Nonna might explain it: **Food is life. Sit down. Eat something. Then we will solve the problem.**

Breakfast, Snack & Lunch

Please make sure your Learner:

- Eats a nourishing breakfast before arriving
- Brings a separate, healthy snack
- Brings a filling, nourishing lunch
- Has enough food to remain satisfied throughout the day
- Brings food that complies with Magnolia's current allergy requirements
- Does not bring candy or foods containing artificial colors or flavors

Please include protein, healthy fats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, or other nourishing foods that provide sustained energy. Children are growing, moving, thinking, climbing, creating, and carrying home half of the Field inside their sneakers. A handful of crackers may not be enough to carry them through the day.

We understand that lunches will not look identical. Different families eat differently, and different bodies have different needs. We are not measuring quinoa portions at the gate or requiring every lunch box to look as though it was packed for a wellness magazine. We simply ask families to send enough real, nourishing food to help their Learner feel and function well.

Candy, Artificial Colors & Flavors

Candy and foods containing artificial colors or artificial flavors are not permitted on campus.

Please do not pack candy, brightly dyed treats, artificially flavored drinks, or similar items in snacks or lunches. If one accidentally arrives, the Learner will be asked to save it for the ride home.

There is always a reason to eat sugar—a birthday, a holiday, a celebration, Tuesday, or the discovery that someone successfully located both shoes before leaving the house. Magnolia is one of the places where we intentionally step away from that pattern and allow natural foods to become normal, exciting, and enjoyable.

Allergies & Required Forms

Our community includes families managing food allergies, celiac disease, food sensitivities, dietary restrictions, and individual food preferences. These differences must always be treated seriously and respectfully. All required allergy, medical, and dietary forms will be sent digitally with this handbook and **must be completed before orientation**. We need accurate, current information before Learners arrive so that our team can prepare appropriately.

Parents who arrive at orientation with incomplete forms may be lovingly held in Parent Detention until they are completed. We promise not to assign lines on a chalkboard, but we may place a device in your hands and point toward the form with tremendous enthusiasm.

Because we currently have Learners with contact-based allergies, **please do not send foods containing nuts or shrimp until you receive the complete allergy notice for this school year.** Once every family's paperwork has been received and reviewed, Magnolia will send a current allergy notice identifying the foods that may not be brought onto campus and clarifying whether any foods may be safely reintroduced.

Allergy needs can change from year to year, so please do not rely upon a previous year's list. Waiting for completed forms is not exciting, but keeping every Learner safe is—and that requires current information from every family.

Learners are often knowledgeable about what they can and cannot eat, but children should never carry the entire responsibility for managing their food safety. Parents must provide accurate information, Educational Guides must remain familiar with documented requirements, and Learners should continue learning how to advocate for themselves in developmentally appropriate ways.

Dietary Differences

Food can have a significant effect on a person's health and well-being. Different bodies respond differently to the same foods. Something that nourishes one person may make another person ill, and something that is safe for most of the community may present a serious risk to someone else.

We distinguish between:

- Life-threatening, airborne, or contact-based allergies
- Medical requirements, including celiac disease
- Food sensitivities or intolerances
- Religious or ethical dietary restrictions
- Family and personal food preferences

All of these differences should be treated respectfully, although the precautions required will vary. A personal preference or an allergy requiring ingestion may not require the entire community to avoid a particular food, while a severe airborne or contact-based allergy may require a campus-wide prohibition.

No Learner should have to defend or explain why they are eating something different. We teach children that **food is joy. Food is life. Different families eat differently, and that is part of what makes food so interesting. Variety is the spice of life.**

No Refrigeration or Reheating

Magnolia cannot refrigerate or reheat individual snacks or lunches. We simply do not have the capacity to do so for our full community.

Please pack food that can be eaten cold, use an insulated lunch container with an ice pack for foods that must remain chilled, or send warm food in a thermos designed to maintain a safe temperature.

Please also make sure your Learner can independently open and close the containers you send. A container may possess extraordinary leak-proof engineering, but if opening it requires three adults, a wrench, and whispered encouragement, it may not be the best choice for lunch.

We will, of course, always be there to help a Learner who occasionally needs assistance wrestling with a stubborn thermos. Independence is the goal; abandoning someone to negotiate alone with industrial-strength Tupperware is not.

Monday Community Lunch

Beginning in October, Magnolia will order pizza for our Learners on Mondays. Additional details will be communicated to families before our Monday lunches begin.

If your Learner cannot or does not eat the pizza being offered, please send a complete lunch from home on Mondays.

We previously offered a separate gluten-free pasta option, but nearly every Learner who received it preferred the meal sent from home. We listened to both the Learners and the remarkably untouched pasta. Families whose Learners cannot eat pizza should therefore continue sending food that is familiar, safe, and satisfying.

When in doubt, send lunch. It is always better for a Learner to have food available than to discover at lunchtime that the planned option does not meet their needs—or their very firmly held culinary opinions.

Food Sharing

Food sharing is generally allowed at Magnolia and gives us an opportunity to teach generosity, appreciation, and healthy boundaries.

We have two simple expectations:

Eat your own food first, and do not ask someone else to give you theirs.

Once a Learner has eaten their own food, they may offer something to a friend, provided it is safe for that Learner. The Learner receiving the food should wait until it is offered rather than asking, begging, negotiating, exchanging favors, or staring so intensely at someone's strawberries that the strawberries begin to feel uncomfortable.

Learners with food allergies may not eat food from another person's lunch. Even when the ingredients appear safe—and even when it is something the Learner normally eats—we cannot know exactly how it was prepared or whether cross-contact occurred.

Please help your Learner practice a simple response such as, **"No, thank you. I have to be careful about allergies."** We will also remind Learners not to feel offended when someone declines an offer to share. A kind offer is still kind even when the answer is no.

Educational Guides will remain attentive when food is shared, but Learners are also developing the important skills of caring for themselves, respecting another person's "no," and understanding that generosity must be freely offered.

The lesson is simple: nourish yourself first, be generous when you wish to be, appreciate generosity when it is offered, and do not feel entitled to what belongs to someone else.

Encourage—Don't Force

Here may be the only place where we are not entirely like a Nonna.

My Nonna used to look at an untouched plate and say, "The food is crying. Eat me! Eat me! How can you let it sit there and cry?" Other old-school Nonnas were known to keep children at the table until every last bite disappeared.

For this policy, we are keeping the joy of sharing a meal and leaving the force-feeding traditions safely in the past.

Learners should be encouraged to experience new foods, particularly when they have helped prepare them. Educational Guides may invite them to smell something, touch it, taste a tiny amount, or simply learn about it. We may discuss the ingredients, where they came from, how another culture prepares them, or why they taste the way they do.

Curiosity is the goal.

We do not force Learners to clean their plates or turn someone's refusal to taste broccoli into a twenty-minute negotiation. We offer, encourage, model, and move on. A Learner who says "absolutely not" in September may be happily eating it in March—especially if nobody has spent six months turning it into a battle.

Cooking With Our Learners

Most of our Learners love cooking. Our nutrition-based cooking program is one of the ways food and nutrition education become real. Learners may have opportunities to handle ingredients, measure, chop when developmentally appropriate, mix, season, cook, taste, serve, clean, and enjoy something they helped create.

Cooking teaches an extraordinary amount without needing to announce itself as a lesson. There is mathematics in measuring, science in watching ingredients transform, history and geography in recipes, practical life in preparing food, collaboration in working together, and confidence in being able to say, **"I made this."**

Food used in classroom cooking must comply with the current campus allergy restrictions. When reasonably possible, we will consider the dietary needs of individual Learners. If an activity cannot be adapted, the Educational Guide may contact the family in advance so that a safe alternative can be arranged.

Cooking with children is usually slower and considerably messier than an adult doing everything alone. That is okay. The participation, the mess, and the cleanup are all part of the lesson.

Hunger & Hydration

If a Learner says they are hungry, we listen. Children are growing, and some days they are simply hungrier than others.

We do not use food as a reward or withhold it as punishment. If a Learner regularly appears unusually hungry, consistently does not eat, or develops a concerning pattern around food, Ground Control may contact the family so we can better understand what is happening and determine whether additional support would be helpful.

Sometimes behavior that appears very complicated has a remarkably simple explanation: **the kid is hungry**. Perhaps that is why every Nonna's first question is, "Are you hungry?" She has already assumed the answer is yes and is reaching for a plate before you finish responding.

Please send enough food. We would need several full-time chefs to accommodate every spontaneous request from our Learners, and while that sounds delightful, it is not currently reflected in the budget.

Florida is also hot. Learners have access to filtered drinking water and should remain well hydrated throughout the day. Please help your Learner understand that bringing a water bottle is only the first step; occasionally, they must also remember to drink from it.

Water Only, Please

Water is the only drink that should be sent to Magnolia.

Please do not send juice, juice boxes, soda, coffee, tea, sports drinks, energy drinks, or other sugary beverages. Magnolia may provide herbal teas as part of our curriculum or other supervised activities, but beverages sent from home should be water only.

Mealtimes Are Community Time

Eating together is one of the oldest ways human beings build community. We want mealtimes to feel calm, social, and pleasurable. Learners are encouraged to talk with one another, practice manners, notice when someone needs help, and enjoy the people seated around them.

We are not simply fueling children so they can return to academics. We are teaching them something they will do nearly every day for the rest of their lives: how to nourish themselves and enjoy breaking bread with other people.

Slow down. Talk. Laugh. Try something new if you want to. Pass what is being shared. Clean up afterward. That is a great deal of education for one lunch table. The goal is not culinary perfection. The goal is to send food your Learner will actually eat that nourishes them well enough to enjoy the day.

Plants and Flowers

A Living Part of the Environment

At Magnolia, plants and flowers are not merely decorations. They bring beauty, life, responsibility, and a connection to nature into our classrooms. Caring for living things teaches patience, observation, consistency, and the quiet understanding that something depends upon us.

When every Learner contributes one plant, our community begins the year with approximately 85 living gifts. Together, they transform shelves, windows, classrooms, and outdoor spaces into environments that feel warm, peaceful, and alive. Each Learner has the opportunity to recognize the plant they contributed, care for it, and feel that they helped create the space they share.

The First-Day Plant

Every Learner should bring one potted plant on the first day of school to donate to their classroom. Families will see their Learner's classroom during orientation and may use that opportunity to decide what size and type of plant would work well in the space. Plants of all sizes are welcome, provided they can be safely accommodated in the classroom or its surrounding environment.

Please place the plant in a **beautiful ceramic pot** that will contribute to the warmth and beauty of the prepared environment. It does not need to be expensive or elaborate; it should simply be something lovely that can become part of the room.

Please select a plant that:

- Is safe for children to touch and care for
- Is not toxic or poisonous
- Does not have thorns, sharp spines, or other hazardous features
- Has not been treated with harsh pesticides or chemicals
- Can reasonably live in the classroom or surrounding outdoor environment

The plant becomes a donation to the classroom, but your Learner will know which plant they contributed and will help care for it throughout the year. This gives each Learner a personal connection to the environment while also teaching that something can belong to the community and still feel special to the person who brought it.

We cannot promise that every plant will survive until the end of the year. Plants, like children, occasionally arrive with mysterious needs, dramatic reactions to water, and very strong opinions about sunlight. Their care—and sometimes their attempted rescue—is all part of the experience.

Caring for Our Plants

Learners will help water, observe, clean, rotate, prune when appropriate, and care for the plants in their classroom. These are meaningful practical-life responsibilities, not simply classroom chores.

Through this work, Learners begin to notice when soil is dry, when a leaf needs attention, when a plant is growing toward the light, or when too much enthusiastic watering has created a small indoor swamp.

Educational Guides will help Learners develop the judgment and skills needed to care for the plants responsibly. The goal is not horticultural perfection. The goal is to practice attentiveness, responsibility, gentleness, and care for the living world.

Florist of the Week

Each family will also be invited to serve as **Florist of the Week** once during the school year.

A sign-up sheet will be sent to families. Please select one available week and send fresh flowers with your Learner on Monday morning of that week. One week per family is all that is requested.

The flowers will be used by the Learners to create arrangements and bring fresh beauty into their classroom. Flower arranging gives children an opportunity to slow down, observe color and form, make thoughtful choices, care for delicate materials, and contribute something beautiful to the community.

Flowers do not need to come from a florist or arrive in an elaborate bouquet. They may come from a grocery store, farmers' market, local garden, or another safe source. A simple bunch of seasonal flowers is perfect. Please avoid flowers with thorns, toxic varieties, or those treated with harsh chemicals.

Thank you for helping our classrooms grow into environments that are cared for, contributed to, and beautifully alive.

Parent Involvement

A Community Without Another Obligation

Parents are an essential part of the Magnolia community, but we also know that Parents are already busy raising children, managing homes, working, homeschooling, and attempting to remember where everyone needs to be on any given day.

Magnolia is intended to support your family's lifestyle—not add another unpaid position to your résumé. We do not require volunteer hours, and Parents are not expected to help operate the daily program or staff our school events. Our Educational

Guides manage the program, classrooms, and on-campus events so that Parents may simply arrive and enjoy them with their families.

We do, however, create community activities where families can spend time together, form friendships, and build genuine connections outside the daily program. Participation is always welcome, but it should feel joyful—not like one more item glaring at you from the calendar.

For Parents who genuinely enjoy planning, organizing, fundraising, crafting, or creating experiences for the community, we also offer several optional Parent committees.

A Note About Commitment

Please join a committee only if you have the time and genuine desire to participate. We completely understand that family circumstances and schedules change, but committees function best when everyone who signs up communicates reliably and follows through on the responsibilities they accept.

Ideas are wonderful. Ideas accompanied by people who are willing and able to help carry them out are even more wonderful.

Each committee will meet and coordinate independently. A Magnolia team member will serve as a liaison to answer questions, provide necessary information, and ensure that plans remain consistent with Magnolia's mission, calendar, and educational goals. The liaison is there to support the committee, but will not be responsible for managing its meetings or completing the work assigned to its members.

Event Planning Committee

The **Event Planning Committee** helps plan and coordinate joyful, family-centered community events throughout the year.

These may include:

- Pop-Up events
- Our school dance
- Holiday gatherings
- Possible participation in the Vero Beach Christmas Parade
- Other community experiences developed during the year

Committee members will work together independently and communicate with their Magnolia liaison regarding dates, logistics, campus needs, and final approval.

Magnolia's Educational Guides will continue to manage and staff on-campus school events. Committee members assist with planning, coordination and set-up/clean-up, but Parents are not expected to step into the role of an Educational Guide or run the program during an event. You are still allowed to enjoy yourself...clipboard optional.

Educational Excursion Committee

The **Educational Excursion Committee** plans optional excursions and field trips that connect meaningfully with our curriculum and offer families opportunities to explore together.

These experiences will take place after program hours, on Fridays, or on weekends so that they enrich our program without interrupting the daily learning environment.

The committee is responsible for:

- Identifying appropriate locations and experiences
- Communicating with venues
- Coordinating dates and details with Magnolia
- Sharing information with interested families
- Managing sign-ups and collecting any applicable fees
- Ensuring that the proposed excursion aligns with Magnolia's educational goals and values

These excursions are **optional family activities**, not part of Magnolia's supervised program day. Magnolia does not transport Learners to or from excursions, and Educational Guides are not responsible for supervising participating children. Each Learner must attend with a Parent, legal guardian, or another adult specifically authorized by the family. That adult remains responsible for the Learner for the entire experience.

Siblings and grandparents are welcome unless a particular venue imposes its own attendance or age restrictions. We love an excursion that becomes a family adventure—especially when a grandparent arrives with snacks, tissues, and the quiet confidence of someone who has already raised children and knows exactly how this story ends.

Support & Sustain Committee

The **Support & Sustain Committee** supports Magnolia's long-term vision of owning its own campus.

In partnership with Magnolia, this committee may:

- Develop fundraising ideas
- Coordinate approved fundraising events
- Conduct community outreach
- Seek appropriate donations or sponsorships
- Help share Magnolia's long-term vision with potential supporters

Fundraising efforts must remain consistent with the values of The House of Natural Living and The Magnolia Schoolhouse. All ideas, outreach, events, sponsorships, and public communications must be presented to and approved by Ground Control before moving forward. The committee will meet independently and check in regularly with its Magnolia liaison to share ideas, coordinate logistics, receive support, and ensure that any outreach or commitments are approved before being shared with the broader community.

Dreaming big is strongly encouraged, and Ground Control will help make sure those big dreams are thoughtfully coordinated and brought to life in a way that represents Magnolia well.

“Crafternoon” Planning Committee

The **“Crafternoon” Planning Committee** helps create several afternoons of beautiful, meaningful craft-making connected to our curriculum.

The goal is to offer projects that Learners will be proud to display in their homes or, when appropriate, sell through our markets to help support the program. Crafts should be thoughtful, creative, age-appropriate, and made with quality materials.

Committee members may:

- Develop craft ideas connected to the curriculum
- Present those ideas for approval
- Create supply lists
- Purchase and organize approved materials
- Prepare the activities for the Educational Guides
- Coordinate with the Magnolia liaison regarding timing, budget, and reimbursement

Magnolia will provide an approved budget, and purchases will be coordinated and reimbursed through Ground Control. Because committee members will work directly with our Learners, fingerprint clearances will be required.

The Crafternoon Committee will prepare, facilitate, and supervise the projects, bringing its creativity, time, and patience to our Learners each month. We are tremendously grateful to the Parents willing to dream up something beautiful and then spend an afternoon surrounded by children, craft supplies, and the mysterious knowledge that glitter can travel considerably farther than science has been able to explain.

Their effort gives our Learners meaningful opportunities to create something they can proudly display, use, share, or contribute to our markets—and makes Crafternoon possible in the first place.

No Stress, No Gossip & No Politics

Any Parent participating in a committee or Magnolia community activity must honor our three foundational expectations:

- No stress
- No gossip
- No politics

No stress does not mean that nothing will ever go wrong. Something will be forgotten, a plan will change, or the weather will develop a dramatic personality five minutes before an outdoor event. It means we respond calmly, communicate directly, remain flexible, and remember that no centerpiece is worth damaging a relationship.

No gossip means that concerns are brought directly to the person who can appropriately address them. Committee conversations should never become a place to discuss other families, Learners, Educational Guides, or private matters within the community.

No politics means that Magnolia gatherings and committees remain free from political campaigning, debate, persuasion, or division. Our families hold a wide range of beliefs, and our shared focus is the children and the community we are building together.

Confidentiality

We know this likely goes without saying, but apparently a handbook must occasionally say the things everyone already knows.

Any Parent volunteering on a committee must maintain confidentiality and protect the well-being and privacy of every child. Occasionally, limited health or safety information—such as an allergy—may need to be shared. Anything seen or heard while working with the Learners should remain confidential, and any concern should be brought to Ground Control immediately so we can address it with care.

An easy rule of thumb: internal Magnolia matters remain internal. You are always welcome to discuss a concern with Ground Control, but not with the wider community. We sincerely appreciate the discretion and care of the Parents who share their time with our Learners.

Of course, confidentiality never replaces our legal responsibility to protect children. Like all adults in Florida, Parent committee members remain subject to mandatory reporting requirements.

As a Nonna might remind us: if someone trusted you enough to tell you something privately, you hold it carefully. You do not serve it with the antipasti to everyone who stops by.

Participate in the Way That Works for Your Family

Some Parents will love joining a committee. Others will attend community gatherings, meet another family, share a meal, and build friendships naturally. Some will be managing a season of life in which simply getting everyone dressed, fed, and through the gate is participation enough.

All of those families belong here.

There is no volunteer-hour requirement and no prize for having the busiest calendar. We simply invite families to enjoy the community, connect in ways that feel natural, and participate when doing so brings something meaningful to their lives.

Magnolia provides the daily educational program. Our community activities create opportunities for families to know one another beyond car line—and perhaps finally learn the names of the lovely people they have been waving to from two vehicles away all year.

Activities

Every Year Has Its Own Personality

One of the joys of Magnolia is that every year develops its own personality. We bring back beloved traditions, revisit experiences that have been especially successful, and continue creating new opportunities inspired by our curriculum, our community, and the interests of our Learners.

Over the years, Magnolia has hosted markets, performances, immersive Pop-Up Events, invention fairs, community gatherings, workshops, dances, and many other memorable experiences. Some return in new forms, while others make room for the next wonderful idea.

We love having the flexibility to mix things up because not every meaningful Magnolia experience can be predicted before the gates open. A Learner's question, a curriculum topic, a community connection, or someone saying, "This may sound a little crazy, but what if we...?" can begin as a small idea and grow into something that transforms the entire campus—occasionally requiring costumes, several folding tables, and an alarming amount of hot glue.

The School Dance

Our annual School Dance gives Learners and their families an opportunity to gather, dress up, dance, laugh, and enjoy one another outside the regular program day.

Specific details, including the date, location, theme, schedule, and attendance information, will be sent to families separately.

The dance is intended to be a joyful community celebration. Dancing ability is entirely optional. Enthusiasm is appreciated. Standing near the food and insisting that you are "watching everyone's things" is also a time-honored and acceptable form of participation.

The Magnolia Talent Show

Our Talent Show is an opportunity for Learners to share something they love, something they have practiced, or something that makes them wonderfully themselves.

Talent is not limited to singing, dancing, or playing an instrument. Learners may share talents involving any fabulous talent they wish to display that can be reasonably done on stage.

Learners may participate individually or, when appropriate, work with other Learners. Participation is encouraged but never required. Details regarding sign-

ups, preparation, rehearsals, and the performance will be communicated during the year.

The goal is not to create a perfectly polished production. It is to give Learners an opportunity to develop confidence, prepare for something meaningful, support one another, and experience the tremendous courage involved in standing up and saying, **“This is something I can do.”**

Magnolia Pop-Up Events

Our immersive Pop-Up Events bring parts of the curriculum to life.

Past Pop-Ups have transformed the campus into entirely different places and times, allowing Learners and families to experience history, culture, art, food, music, performance, and practical skills in memorable ways. Some of our favorite Pop-Ups may return, while new ideas will continue to emerge. The theme and details will be shared once each event has taken shape.

Our Pop-Up Events are also part of Magnolia’s fundraising efforts. Tickets are sold first to cover the considerable costs of creating the experience, including materials, decorations, food, activities, and all the little things that somehow multiply once we begin transforming an entire campus. Any funds raised beyond those expenses go directly back into supporting the Magnolia program.

We hope every Magnolia family will attend. We also never want the cost of a ticket to prevent a family from joining us. If the ticket price presents a genuine barrier, please contact Ground Control privately so we can help. Purchasing a ticket does more than reserve a place at the event. It helps us create the experience, welcome our whole community, and continue bringing beautiful—and occasionally wonderfully elaborate—ideas to life for our Learners.

Additional Opportunities

Throughout the year, Magnolia may offer additional activities, clubs, workshops, classes, performances, markets, projects, and community experiences.

These opportunities grow from the interests and readiness of our Learners, the talents of our Educational Guides and community members, and the topics unfolding within our curriculum. When something new and exciting becomes available, families will receive an email containing all relevant details.

This allows us to keep creating, experimenting, repeating what has been especially meaningful, and introducing experiences we may not have imagined when the handbook was written.

After-Program Opportunities

When appropriate opportunities become available, after-program activities may be offered to **Grove and Commons Learners** who are ready for a longer day and can participate independently.

After-program activities are not offered to Greenhouse Learners. Their regular Magnolia day already provides a full and wonderfully busy experience. By dismissal, they have learned, worked, played, negotiated, created, climbed, eaten, and likely moved several pounds of sand from one side of the campus to the other. That is enough for one small human.

Offerings may vary throughout the year according to Learner interest, instructor availability, and the natural rhythm of the program. Each opportunity will be shared with families as its details are finalized.

Medication and Sick Policy

Medication

Magnolia does not administer routine prescription or over-the-counter medication, including antibiotics, pain relievers, fever reducers, cold medicine, allergy medicine, or medication for ongoing conditions. If your Learner needs medication during the day, please contact Ground Control in advance so a Parent or authorized caregiver can come to campus and administer it.

The only exception is prescribed, life-saving rescue medication needed during an emergency, such as an EpiPen, rescue inhaler, seizure medication, or glucagon. Parents must coordinate with Ground Control before bringing rescue medication to campus and provide all required authorizations, instructions, and current medical information. Medication must be unexpired and in its original, properly labeled container.

Please do not place medication in a Learner's lunch box, pocket, or belongings without making arrangements with Ground Control. A mysterious pill discovered beside the crackers is an adventure no one at Magnolia wishes to have.

When Learners Are Not Feeling Well

Parents know their children best, and we trust families to use thoughtful judgment. We do not follow one rigid formula for every symptom. A child may have a runny nose and feel energetic, or have no fever and feel absolutely miserable. We look at the whole child: how they feel and whether they can comfortably participate in the day.

If your Learner does not feel well or is exhibiting significant symptoms of illness, please keep them home. Please do not use medication to lower a fever, suppress symptoms, or make a child appear well enough to attend when their body is asking for rest. If medicine is necessary simply to get them through the day, they should spend that day recovering at home.

Sometimes the proper curriculum is sleep, fluids, something comforting to eat, and being left peacefully beneath a blanket. A Nonna would prescribe soup, insist that the child is too thin regardless of all available evidence, and return five minutes later with more food. We support this plan.

A Practical Note About Boogers

Children are wonderful. Children can also be a little gross. We remind Learners to wipe their noses, throw away tissues, wash their hands, and avoid touching every available surface immediately afterward. Their compliance is occasionally less than perfect.

Because our Learners share many beautiful hands-on materials, a Learner who is especially boogery, coughing on materials, or leaving sticky evidence of illness throughout the environment requires considerably more individual attention and cleaning. Whatever your philosophy about everyday exposure to germs, we can probably agree that no one wants to begin a math lesson by discovering that the golden beads are sticky.

If your Learner needs continual help managing their symptoms or cannot independently maintain reasonable hygiene, home is the more comfortable and appropriate place for them that day.

Returning After an Illness or Injury

Learners may return when they are feeling well, managing any remaining mild symptoms, and able to participate comfortably in the regular day.

Following a serious illness or injury—or whenever it is unclear whether a Learner is ready to return—Magnolia may require a physician's note providing full clearance and identifying any ongoing restrictions or accommodations.

Ground Control will determine whether those needs can be safely and reasonably accommodated within our environment and program. A physician's clearance helps us understand what a Learner needs, but some restrictions may require more individual care than Magnolia can provide.

Becoming Unwell at Magnolia

If a Learner becomes unwell during the day, we will provide comfort, determine what they need, and contact a Parent. The urgency of pickup will depend upon the circumstances. A Learner who is vomiting or clearly very ill will need to be picked up immediately. A Learner with a mild stomachache may rest, have some herbal tea, and wait comfortably while a Parent comes as soon as reasonably possible.

If we cannot reach a Parent, we will contact the Learner's emergency contact. If immediate medical attention is necessary, Magnolia will contact emergency services first and then notify the family.

Our goal is to look at the child in front of us, use common sense, and give each situation the care, flexibility, and compassion it deserves.

Discipline Policy

Discipline: A Framework of Respect, Growth & Restoration

Discipline Is Teaching

At Magnolia, discipline means teaching—not punishing, shaming, controlling, or labeling a child by their worst moment. Our goal is not to produce children who behave perfectly because an adult is watching. We want Learners to develop genuine self-discipline: the ability to manage themselves, respect others, make thoughtful choices, repair harm, and try again.

“Discipline must come through liberty.”

—Maria Montessori

The goal is for a Learner to become the master of their own behavior—not simply skilled at avoiding consequences.

Children Are Children

Learners will make poor decisions. They will irritate one another, misunderstand someone’s tone, overreact, become bossy, exclude someone, say something unkind, play too roughly, regret it, and try again. This is not a failure of childhood. It *is* childhood.

Magnolia is intentionally designed to give Learners many opportunities to interact. They work, play, build, negotiate, share, solve problems, and spend their days in genuine community. Conflict is a normal part of that experience. Our goal is not to eliminate every disagreement. It is to help Learners become increasingly capable of handling conflict with honesty, confidence, compassion, and self-control.

“The undisciplined child enters into discipline by working in the company of others; not by being told that he is naughty.”

—Maria Montessori

Conflict Is Not Always Bullying

Bullying is repeated, intentional harm directed toward another person within an imbalance of power. It is not every unkind comment, disagreement, refusal to play, bossy interaction, or conflict between two Learners. If one Learner says another Learner’s sneakers are ugly, that is unkind. If the second Learner retaliates by

declaring that the first Learner's entire family has terrible taste in footwear, we now have a conflict. We do not necessarily have bullying.

Arguments, shifting friendships, hurt feelings, exclusion, teasing, impulsive behavior, and physical play that goes too far may all require adult guidance. They should not automatically receive the same label or response. Making this distinction does not excuse unkind behavior. **We address unkind behavior the moment we are made aware of it.** It allows us to understand what actually happened and respond in a way that helps the Learners involved grow.

How We Respond

When a problem occurs, Educational Guides consider the Learners involved, their ages and developmental needs, what happened beforehand, the effect of the behavior, and whether it is part of a larger pattern. Depending upon the situation, Educational Guides will help Learners calm themselves, understand what happened, communicate honestly, and practice a better response. When needed, we will set firm boundaries, provide space, limit an activity or material, and support the Learner in repairing any harm before returning and trying again.

Consequences should be logical, respectful, and connected to what occurred. A Learner who misuses a material may lose access to it temporarily. A Learner who repeatedly disrupts a game may need to step away from it. A Learner who creates a mess or damages something may help restore it. The purpose is not to make a child suffer. It is to help them understand that choices have effects and that freedom must always be accompanied by responsibility.

"Since the child now learns to move rather than to sit still, he prepares himself not for the school, but for life."

—Maria Montessori

When Parents Will Be Contacted

Educational Guides handle the ordinary conflicts of childhood as part of the daily work of the community. Parents will not receive a report about every disagreement, impulsive comment, or problem that was successfully addressed and resolved. If we reported every minor conflict, Magnolia would need another full-time position devoted entirely to the sentence, "And then she said..."

Ground Control will contact Parents when behavior is serious, unusual, recurring, unsafe, significantly disruptive, or not improving with ordinary guidance. We may also seek a Parent's insight when greater consistency between home and Magnolia would help a Learner succeed. A Parent may be asked to pick up a Learner when the child presents a genuine risk of harm, cannot participate safely, or is disrupting the environment beyond what can reasonably be managed while still caring for the rest of the community.

When serious concerns persist, Magnolia may request a meeting, develop a written support plan, recommend outside professional guidance or services, or establish conditions necessary for continued enrollment. If a Learner requires therapeutic, behavioral, or continual one-to-one support beyond what Magnolia can provide, we may determine that our environment is not presently the appropriate setting for that child.

When Your Learner Comes Home With a Story

Children usually tell the part of a story that felt most important to them. Sometimes that is the whole story. Sometimes it is the final twelve seconds of a much longer production.

Before drawing conclusions, it may help to ask:

- What happened before that?
- What did you do next?
- Did you ask an Educational Guide for help?
- How was it handled?
- Is anything still unresolved?

If your Learner brings home a concern that appears serious, ongoing, or unresolved, please bring it to Ground Control. We will gather information from the people who were present and work to understand the full situation before assigning blame or labels.

Privacy Matters

Magnolia can discuss your Learner, what we observed, how we responded, and how we plan to support them.

We cannot disclose another child's private information, diagnosis, family circumstances, disciplinary consequences, or confidential conversations. We will protect your Learner's privacy in exactly the same way.

Repair, Then Return

We believe children are more than their difficult moments.

A Learner may need a firm boundary. They may need to stop, tell the truth, listen, apologize, repair something, and make a different choice. One bad decision, difficult afternoon, or comment about someone's allegedly ugly sneakers does not make a child bad.

"Many errors correct themselves as we go through life."

—Maria Montessori

A Nonna would expect you to make it right—and then she would put your chair back at the table because you still belong there.

That is the spirit of discipline at Magnolia: clear limits, honest conversations, meaningful repair, and another opportunity to grow.

Calendar and Closings

Magnolia follows its own program calendar rather than the local school district calendar. Our scheduled closings are listed on the Magnolia website.

When the local school district closes because of a hurricane, dangerous weather, road conditions, or bridge closures, Magnolia will also close. Any special event scheduled for that day will be postponed and rescheduled when reasonably possible.

Florida weather occasionally makes plans of its own. We will communicate any weather-related changes to families as quickly and clearly as possible.

Water Bottles

Magnolia provides each Learner with a stainless-steel water bottle. Please use that bottle, label it clearly, and return it each program day containing only water. Learners are welcome to decorate their bottles and make them their own—as long as their names remain easy to find.

We selected these bottles intentionally. They are large enough that Learners do not spend their entire day visiting the water cooler, but not so large that one refill drains the reverse-osmosis tank and leaves everyone else staring sadly at the faucet. They are stainless steel to reduce the use of plastic, and they have straws rather than sport caps to prevent squirting incidents that are somehow always described as accidents.

We appreciate families using the bottles we so lovingly selected and provided. Please—pretty, pretty please, with a cherry on top—**label the water bottle.**

The first water bottle is complimentary. If a replacement is required, please send your learner in with \$20 for a replacement water bottle. We have extra on hand for those occasional times.

Toy Policy

All toys and personal play items must remain at home.

This includes stuffed animals, trading cards, collectibles, fidgets, sports equipment, homemade objects, nature treasures, and anything else brought for playing, sharing, trading, or showing. Magnolia has everything Learners need for the day.

If something is needed for a special activity, an Educational Guide will email Parents directly. Unless you receive that email, please assume the answer is no. If your Learner insists otherwise, they may be pulling your leg. Placing a Pokémon card inside a pocket does not transform it into school supplies.

Any prohibited item brought to Magnolia will be held by an Educational Guide and returned at pickup. Magnolia cannot be responsible for anything lost, damaged, traded, broken, buried, or mysteriously adopted by another Learner.

A Nonna would not convene a committee to discuss whether the toy is distracting. She would simply hold out her hand and say, **“Put that down. Give it to me. I give it back to your mamma. Now go finish your meal—I made you a nice sauce.”**

Screen Time

None Is Best

Magnolia is a screen-free learning environment. Learners may not bring phones, tablets, smartwatches, video games, laptops, or personal electronic devices onto campus.

Our philosophy extends beyond the hours Learners spend with us: **when it comes to recreational screen time, none is best.**

We also live in the real world. Screens are everywhere, Parents are busy, and sometimes everyone would like to prepare dinner without being asked seventeen consecutive

questions. We are not interested in shaming families or pretending that perfect screen-free households exist.

As a reasonable and achievable goal, we strongly encourage families to limit total recreational screen time to **no more than one hour per day**—and less whenever possible.

This is not a rule Magnolia can or wishes to enforce inside anyone's home. It is part of our shared understanding of wellness and an important element of the partnership between Magnolia and our Parents.

All Screens Count

Screen time includes:

- Phones
- Tablets
- Televisions
- Video games
- Computers
- Smartwatches
- YouTube and other streaming platforms
- Social media
- Educational applications and games

An application does not cease to be screen time because it contains math problems or periodically congratulates the child for identifying a noun. **Educational screen time is still screen time.**

We recognize that not every use of a screen is identical. Watching a thoughtfully chosen movie or funny program together as a family can create connection, shared laughter, and conversation. That is very different from a child sitting alone and scrolling through an endless stream of content selected by an algorithm.

We ask Parents to consider not only how long their Learner is using a screen, but what they are watching, how they are engaging with it, and what the screen is replacing.

Why It Matters at Magnolia

What happens outside Magnolia naturally arrives with the Learner each morning.

We see noticeable differences in attention, regulation, frustration tolerance, conversation, creativity, and willingness to engage after significant screen use. Highly stimulating games, videos, and rapidly changing content can make the natural pace of real life feel painfully slow by comparison.

At Magnolia, Learners are expected to listen, wonder, persist, create, move, observe, read, solve problems, tolerate boredom, navigate relationships, and remain with work even when nothing flashes, sings, awards points, or performs a small celebration every eleven seconds.

Those capacities take time and practice to develop. We work hard to strengthen them during the day, and excessive screen use can make that work considerably more difficult.

Screens also follow Learners into the social environment long after the device has been put away. Learners talk about the videos they watched, the games they played, the characters they follow, and the things they saw online. We redirect those conversations when they begin to dominate, but we cannot fully create a screen-free childhood during program hours if screens remain the central subject of life outside them.

Especially Not in the Morning

Please avoid screen use before Magnolia whenever at all possible.

A morning spent gaming, watching fast-paced videos, or scrolling can make the transition into a calm, hands-on learning environment especially difficult. The child arrives physically present, but part of their attention may still be chasing the stimulation they just left behind.

Morning is an opportunity to wake gradually, eat breakfast, dress independently, talk with family, listen to music, look out the window, complain mildly about having to find both shoes, and prepare for the actual world.

The actual world may feel less exciting at first, but it contains nearly everything worth experiencing.

What Screens Replace

Time is limited, and Learners need sensorial learning and real experiences through which they can move, touch, build, imagine, create, communicate, and develop meaningful skills. Every moment spent on a screen takes away time that could be spent experiencing and learning from the actual world. Even boredom has value; it creates the quiet space in which a child's own curiosity and imagination can begin.

Boredom is not an emergency. It is often the quiet space immediately before imagination begins. Children do not need to be entertained during every available moment. They need opportunities to discover what their own minds can produce when no device is producing something for them.

Learning More

We strongly encourage Parents to become fully informed about how screens, games, social media, and algorithm-driven content are designed and how they may affect developing minds.

Two helpful places to begin are:

- *Glow Kids* by Dr. Nicholas Kardaras
- *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt

Families may ultimately make different choices inside their homes. We simply ask that those choices be thoughtful, informed, and made with an understanding that screen use can directly affect a Learner's experience, behavior, relationships, and ability to participate at Magnolia.

If we observe a pattern that appears to be affecting your Learner, Ground Control may reach out so we can discuss what we are seeing and work together.

Choose Connection

Our position is not based upon fear of technology. Technology can be useful, impressive, creative, and occasionally necessary. The problem begins when a tool designed to serve human beings starts consuming the childhood it was supposed to improve.

Children have only one childhood. They deserve to spend as much of it as possible touching the world, knowing other people, using their bodies, developing their minds, and learning how to be fully present in their own lives.

A Nonna would take one look at a child staring into a screen while the whole family was gathered around the table and declare, **"Put that thing away! Your family is here. Look at their faces. Talk. Laugh. Eat. This is life!"**

On this particular subject, Magnolia agrees completely with Nonna.

Birthdays

We love birthdays! But we do not love sugar. There is truly always an excuse to eat it, and we are going to do all that we can to avoid it at The Magnolia Schoolhouse. On the same note, we want to celebrate our Learners and have them feel extra special on their birthday. We ask that, if you want to celebrate their birthday at school, please bring in their favorite fruit(s) or vegetable to share with their class. Please make sure it is a fruit or vegetable only...in its pure form. I will answer in advance, no baked goods with fruit in it. No whip cream on the strawberries. No fruit smoothies. Just identifiable fruits or veggies. That will help us know what Learners can enjoy and what Learners might be allergic.

You can bring it in at morning drop off and the Educational Guides will share it with the Learners. This was very successful last year, and there was never one piece of fruit left over. It was amazing!

A Nonna always finds a way to make you feel a little extra special on your birthday—and somehow, there is always food involved. At Magnolia, it just happens to be fruit.

A Final Word of Thanks

Thank you for reading, for trusting us with your Learner, and for being part of Magnolia. This community works because Learners, Parents, and Educational Guides grow together with honesty, respect, and plenty of grace. We are deeply grateful to share in your Learner's childhood.

A Nonna might close a very long explanation of the house rules by saying, "Now you know. Come inside. Sit down. You are family. Have you eaten?"

Welcome to Magnolia.

We are very glad you are here.

** The Magnolia Schoolhouse is a child care facility operating under an exemption pursuant to the laws of the State of Florida and is not subject to licensure or regulation by the Department of Children and Families.*