



Parent Handbook
2011-2012



Introduction

The prepared environments and the role of the teacher in the classroom, distinguish Montessori from other educational approaches. For example, independent activity constitutes about 80% of the work, while teacher-directed activity accounts for the remaining 20%. The reverse percentages are generally true for traditional education. The special environments enable children to perform various tasks which induce thinking about relationships. The prepared environment also offers practical occasions for introducing social relationships through free interaction. The logical, sequential nature of the environment provides orderly structures that guide discovery: theorems are discovered, not presented; spelling rules are derived through recognition of patterns, not merely memorized. Every aspect of the curriculum involves creative invention and careful, thoughtful analysis. In viewing learning outcomes at each Montessori level, it must be emphasized that why and how students arrive at what they know is just as important as what they know.

In the Montessori environment, five distinct areas constitute the prepared environment:

Practical Life enhances the development of task organization and cognitive order through care of self, care of environment, exercises of grace and courtesy and coordination of physical movement.

The **sensorial** area enables the child to order, classify and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, color, pitch, etc.

Mathematics makes use of manipulative materials to enable the child to internalize concepts of number, symbol, sequence, operations and memorization of basic facts.

Language includes oral language development, written expression, reading, the study of grammar, creative dramatics and children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters, alphabet cut-outs and various presentations allowing children to link sounds and letter symbols effortlessly and to express their thoughts through writing.

Cultural activities expose the child to basics in geography, history and life sciences. Music, art and movement education are part of the integrated cultural curriculum.

The Montessori environment unifies the psychosocial, physical and academic functioning of the child. It's important task is to provide students with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security and a sense of order. It also encompasses pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school and community. This foundation will enable them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career.

The classroom is comprised of a multi-age grouping. The three year sequence, allows for a serendipitous experience for the child. Starting with the first year, the child learns to refine basic social, sensory and physical skills; the second year lends itself well to cultivating the beginnings of leadership and role modeling for the younger students. The third year culminates as a leadership year for the child in his/her learning community, able to practice

the many skills gained through the three year cycle. The children look forward to the last year of that cycle re-inforcing and sharing the skills they have gained through the previous years with younger students. Useful terms to know are as follows:

First Year: A child who is typically in his/her first year of a Montessori primary program (approximately a 3-4 year old)

Second Year: A child who is approximately 4-5 years old and is in his/her second year of the primary program.

Third Year: A child who is typically 5-6 years old and is in his/her third year in the primary program. A third year child is equivalent to a kindergartner in traditional education. Our third year children have extended work requirements and lessons, as well as special integrated classes weekly.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Maria Montessori's work was her passion and belief in nurturing the natural and inquisitive aspects of the child. Each child has a style and rhythm for learning. The progression of movement for them is like building blocks one upon the other. In our Montessori classroom the child is encouraged to follow their natural instincts for development, by interacting with a wide range of materials and activities that refine their physical, social, emotional and academic growth.

The skills learned include developing a sense of order, care of oneself and the environment and ordering their concepts of size, color, weight and length. These and many other skills are the framework, which help each child to develop a personal and positive self-image. Independence, inter-dependence and responsibility are encouraged. Social skills are very much part of the developmental picture, where children learn to make friends, share in classroom activities, develop confidence, work cooperatively with other children, contribute to the group in appropriate ways and communicate effectively with one another. Curiosity is prized, and the freedom of making choices (within limits) is characteristic of our classrooms. All of this is balanced with a sense of responsibility and respect for the classroom community as a whole.



Tentative Schedule of the Day

8:30 - 8:45	Children begin to arrive
8:45 - 9:00	Morning line (group gather to start day)
9:00 - 10:45	Work time in the classroom
10:45 - 11:15	Line time (group gathering for lessons, songs, games and stories)
11:15 - 11:45	Playground & <u>Half Day pick-up</u>
11:45 - 12:15	Lunch time
12:15 - 12:45	Playground
12:45 - 1:00	<u>Extended Day pick-up</u>
1:00 - 2:30	Full Day 3 rd Year worktime and specials
2:30 - 3:00	Line time (group gather for end of day)
3:00 - 3:30	Playground and Pick-up



Drop-off and Pick-up

You must notify us in writing of the name of any person other than a parent who is picking up your child. We will also ask to see a picture ID when the person arrives for pick up.

If you are running late, or need to pick up your child quickly, just call us 5-10 minutes ahead and we will assist your child in completing his/her work cycle before you arrive. This helps make a smooth transition for everyone!



Staff Days

On the school calendar, you will notice "Staff Day/No School." These are days for the teachers to come into the classroom and clean, scrub, organize and add new works for the children. It also serves as a time for meetings and/or in-service training for the staff. We are aware that this can be inconvenient for you and encourage you to get together with a few other parents to form a child-care co-op. You can offer to watch a small group of children one day in exchange for care on another staff day. We appreciate your understanding and support for these important days. It benefits the children most of all.



Work, Group and Outside Time

Throughout the day your child will play outside, work independently and with classmates, and participate in indoor and outdoor group activities. We schedule our day to provide the children with at least a two-hour work period in order for concentration to develop and to allow enough time for children to repeat an activity as long as desired. Children have a work period in the morning and afternoon during which s/he may choose a material from the shelves and work alone or with a friend at a table or on a rug.

During group time, the children gather together to share, sing, celebrate, act, dance, and learn . . . It is a time when your child participates in a large group setting and learns the social graces required of the situation.

Outside time entails lots of free play, riding tricycles and scooters, pulling wagons, swinging and pretend play. We go outside every day unless it is raining or extremely cold!! Please make sure your child has appropriate outside clothing. If your child is too sick to go outside, then s/he is too sick to be at school.



Work Bond Jobs

There are many ways for you to earn work bond credits during this school year. There are specific jobs that you can sign up for which will directly help us in the classroom. Some of these jobs include: donating flowers for flower arranging, going to the library and finding books about the topics we are studying, doing the class laundry, providing classroom pet supplies, washing our classroom rugs, coming into the classroom and helping with reading and becoming a room parent.

Other ways to earn credits include: driving on field trips, helping with class parties, coming to school and sharing a craft project or talking about your job, gardening, cooking with a small group . . . just about anything you can think of. We (teachers and children) love having parents come into the class! You will receive 1 credit for every hour of work. More information on work bond requirements will be given during orientation.



Discipline/Conflict Resolution

From the first day of school, the children become aware of the social rules that need to be followed. Responsibility for oneself and treating others with respect are modeled and encouraged. Through role-playing and repetition, the children learn to treat each other with respect and awareness.

We provide an area for the children to work out their problems. We encourage each child to use "I" messages to explain how s/he feels (I don't like it when you . . . I feel _____ when you did _____.) The other child is encouraged to listen carefully and reflect what s/he hears. Each child is allowed to speak, one at a time, and the conflict can be resolved in this manner. If it is an issue that cannot be resolved between the children, even with the help of the teacher, we schedule a family conference. If necessary, we get further support and enlist outside professional help when appropriate.

If a child has difficulty following rules, we help him/her remember the appropriate action and reinforce the positive. If a problem cannot be resolved, we inform the parents of the difficulty and work together to help the child.



Lunch

The children eat lunch between 11:45 and- 12:15 either in the lunchroom or outside. The school offers a daily catered lunch program for students enrolled in Extended Day or Full Day. If your child has any food allergies, please let us know right away.



Snack

During the day your child will have the opportunity to eat snack during the morning work period. Snack is set up in a specific area of the class for two children to enjoy at a time. We will send home the snack basket on the day before it is your child's snack day as a reminder that it is your family's turn.

We are sad to say that due to new state regulations we may only accept snacks that are pre-packaged and prepared from a commercial source (store bought) and sealed. Items could include mini muffins from the bakery, Goldfish crackers, cheese cubes, mini bagels, yogurts, pretzels, as long as the bags come in unopened. Homemade treats are only allowed on special occasions like birthdays or holidays.



Birthdays

We celebrate birthdays at school on or near your child's birthday. (If your child's birthday is in the summer we can celebrate it in the fall, in the spring, or at the child's half birthday.) We have a special group celebration in the morning at 10:45 and ask the birthday parents to join us. Before your child's birthday we will send home a "Birthday Book" to be filled out by you and your child. This is a timeline of your child's life with pictures representing every year of their growth. We will display the book in our classroom for a few days, and then return it to you. This is a fun way for everyone to see how much your child has changed over the years! It is a birthday treat your child will always cherish.

If you wish, you may bring in a special birthday treat in addition to the regular morning snack. Please avoid cakes because the crumbs can make quite a mess, and the added sugars can effect nap and work time.



Family Dinners

Throughout the year, we will have special evenings for all of the families in our class. These will be nights to celebrate a culture that the children have been studying and will include a short program by the children and special treats that the children will prepare in the class. We may ask each family to contribute a potluck dinner item as well. This is a great way to learn more about Montessori philosophy and build community by getting to know each other better. We hope that everyone will attend!



Clothing

You must provide an extra set of seasonally appropriate clothing (pants or shorts, shirt, 2-3 pairs of socks and underwear) for your child to keep at school. All items need to be labeled with your child's name. Extra clothes are kept in classroom cubbies. If your child gets wet or has an accident, we will place the wet clothes in a plastic bag in your child's cubby. Please be sure to return with a new set of extra clothes the next day.

During cold months we DO go outside. Your child must have warm mittens (perhaps an extra pair as well), boots (which can be left at school), hat, coat, and we love snow pants, too!! We may call you at work and ask you to bring in warm items if your child does not have the necessary playground clothing.



Footwear

We encourage your child to wear well-fastened shoes with a non-slip sole to prevent accidents on the playground.

While your child is in the classroom, especially during winter months, we encourage him/her to wear slippers instead of shoes. Indoor shoes such as slip on tennis shoes or a plain slipper can be a nice comfort item from home. Slippers that have a sole made of rubber are best. Cloth-soled slippers can be hard to walk in, and they get wet easily. Please label the slippers on the bottom with your child's name, and we ask that you choose slippers without large character heads.



Parent Observations

We highly encourage you to visit your child in the classroom during the year. You are welcome to visit for the entire day or just a portion of the day. Either way, your child will be very proud and happy to have you. This is a great way to find out more about your child's day and to observe first-hand the magic of the Montessori experience. Please let us know when you would like to come so we can make sure that there is not a schedule conflict.



Letter Bags

Instead of the traditional "show and tell", our class has a letter bag program. Every week we focus on a different letter/sound from the alphabet. In your Friday folder we will send home a brown bag with the sound of the week written on it and your child's name. Your child may bring in up to 3 objects that start with the sound of the week on any day the following week. Remember that we have a phonetic approach to teaching letters. We use the letter sound and not the name so when you help your child find objects say "let's find something that starts with 'b-ah' not something that starts with 'B'.



Injury form

If your child gets hurt when s/he is at school, we will determine how serious the injury is and take appropriate steps. If it is a minor scrape, we will clean the wound and give the child an ice pack if necessary. Band-Aids are available and often work wonders. We will fill out an injury report stating what happened and how it was treated. A copy of this report will be sent home at the end of the day.

If it is a serious injury, we will call you immediately and take the steps that are necessary including calling 911. The entire staff is trained yearly in First Aid and CPR, and is kept up to date on emergency procedures.



Sunscreen

To prevent harm to your child's skin, please send your child to school with sunscreen applied. Most high quality sunscreens work well for 8 hours. If your child is extremely fair, and will need sunscreen re-applied, please send an extra bottle (clearly labeled with the child's name) and we will assist him/her in applying it him/herself.



Student Illnesses and Medications

If a student becomes ill while at school, we will take the following measures:

We will have the child lie down comfortably and take his/her temperature to determine if there is a fever.

If there is a fever (over 99) we will call the parents immediately to have the child picked up.

If there is no fever present, we will still call to inform the parent of the child's condition. We will allow the child to sleep at school, if necessary, as this often helps them feel better.

If your child is obviously feeling ill or running a temperature, please do not send him/her to school. If your child is not acting normal and does not have a temperature, it is a good idea to keep him/her home for the day also. Many times when a child comes to school not feeling well it means they are fighting something off and may be contagious to other children. Please be considerate to the other parents, children and staff, and do not send a sick child to school.

We are unable to dispense any medication to your child unless prescribed in writing by a physician. This includes over-the-counter drugs. Please consult your physician for alternative scheduling of doses. If there can be no alternative scheduling, medication will be administered only in accordance with the following guidelines:

A note must be sent from the child's physician stating what the medication is, the amount to be administered and the times it is to be given.

The parents must fill out a Medication Form giving the school permission to administer the medicine. The medications must be kept in the original container which bears the pharmacy label showing the physician's name, prescription number, name of medication, date filled, child's name, and directions for dosage.

All medications must be passed from adult to adult.

NO MEDICATIONS CAN BE SENT IN BACK PACKS

We keep the medication in a locked box in the fridge.

The medications will be returned to the parent at the end of the day.



Field Trips

We will be taking a couple of field trips this school year. Details of where and when will be coming soon! **We need parents to assist with driving to make these field trips possible.** We understand that taking time away from work can be difficult, so we do our best to schedule trips far in advance. You will receive work bond credits for driving. State law requires that every child 6 years and younger be in a car seat or booster. **YOU MUST LEAVE US A SEAT FOR YOUR CHILD ON FIELD TRIP DAYS OR YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO.**