

MOREAU MONTESSORI SCHOOL



PARENT HANDBOOK

THE MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

Confronted by increasing evidence that children younger than five can benefit from exposure to learning, educators in growing numbers now believe that effective education must start in the third or fourth year. Over 90 years ago, Maria Montessori, the first woman to earn a medical degree from an Italian University, had already said the same thing.

Dr. Maria Montessori began to develop techniques, facilities, and apparatus to educate children. She developed what she called the “prepared environment,” an environment that already possesses a certain order, and the child is urged to develop at his own speed according to individual capacities in a non-competitive atmosphere, in the first year of school. “Never let a child risk failure, until he has a reasonable chance of success,” said Dr. Montessori, understanding the necessity for acquisition of a basic skill before its use in a competitive learning situation. The years between three and six are the years that a child most easily learns the ground rules of human behavior.

Education, to Dr. Montessori, was a preparation for life, not merely a search for intellectual skill. “The child of two and a half, three, four and five,” she said, “has one intuitive aim: his self-development.” He desperately wants to develop his inner resources and his abilities to cope with a strange, complex world. He wants to do and see and learn for himself through his own senses and not through the eyes of an adult. The child who accomplishes this moves into harmony with his world.

The method by which children are taught in the Montessori school might well be “structured learning.” Since the child has learned to work by himself, in the prepared environment, enjoying the presence of other children, but not working necessarily directly with them, the Montessori directress is able to work with a child individually. Classes are ungraded and arranged by groups of ages. The structure of Montessori learning involves the use of many materials, primarily in four basic instruction areas: practical life, sensory development, language, and mathematics. At every step of his learning, the teaching material is designed to test his understanding and to correct his errors.

A child knows at once if he has done his job properly. If he does it incorrectly, he is able to work his way toward the solution without dependence on an adult. Some of these concrete-learning aids allow a child to take the first slow steps toward understanding abstract ideas. What is the letter “A”? What does the word “triangle” really mean? He can pluck a metal triangle from a tray and feel its shape.

Dr. Montessori recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, functions as the authority, offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns, who is motivated through himself to persist in his given task.

Small, child-sized tables and chairs stand alone or in small groups. A youngster may sit at one of them or sprawl on a floor mat. He works at a job he selects and remains with it as long as he wants. He progresses only as he learns.

The teacher moves from child to child, working with individuals and occasionally with small groups. Although children talk and walk around at will, their absorption makes the typical

classroom quiet. Everyone works with a concentration rarely seen in children. Discipline is firm and consistent.

The child who enters Montessori class for the first time begins to work on a wide range of activities related to real life as diverse as working with real snaps and bows, learning to serve juice, scrub his hands, clean his work area when he is finished, and moving his chair quietly when sitting and rising. These jobs are not intended solely to teach a youngster domestic chores. "The child experiences joy at each fresh discovery," said Dr. Montessori. "His satisfaction encourages him to seek new sensations and discoveries." Preparation for such tasks is in the spirit of Dr. Montessori's edict "Teach the importance of doing even the smallest task well." Through his expanding abilities gained in these early assignments, a child begins to see order apparent in confusion. He begins to acquire the independence that comes with working with oneself. He begins to learn how to start and finish a job. Perhaps most importantly, he begins to understand what he can do.

If the Montessori child is free to learn, it is because he has acquired from his exposure to both physical and mental order, an "inner discipline." This is the core of Dr. Montessori's educational philosophy. Patterns of concentration, stick-to-itiveness, and thoroughness, established in early childhood, produce a confident, competent learner in later years.

The average Montessori child can study independently, select his free-time activities, and work with interest and concentration for extremely long periods. He has developed an inner confidence in his ability and serenity seemingly beyond his years. This is what Dr. Montessori intended. More than anything, she was a reformer. "Free a child's potential," she said, "and you will transform him and the world."

Schools have existed historically to teach children to observe, to think, to judge. Montessori introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which intellectual and social discipline go hand-in-hand.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why did Maria Montessori develop her special teaching method?

As a physician, she worked with developmentally challenged children at the Psychiatric Clinic at the University of Rome. Using a Sensorial approach with these children, her results were so gratifying that she began to contemplate the possibility of using similar techniques with normal children. She returned to the University for further study, and in 1907 opened her “Casa De Bambini” House of Children. Feeling that young children had more potential than educators realized, Dr. Montessori began to develop this potential by means of a Sensorial approach.

What is the Montessori Method?

The Montessori Method is an approach to education, which emphasizes the potential of the young child and attempts to develop this by means of a prepared environment, utilizing specially trained teachers and teaching materials.

What is the “Absorbent Mind”?

Dr., Montessori was impressed with the learning ability of young children and calls this special capability the “Absorbent Mind.” It is defined as being the power of the mind that takes in and stores all the impressions the child takes in from birth. Through the absorbed impressions, the child cultivates language, customs, attitudes, religious beliefs, etc., with the result that personality and intelligence are developed. One of Dr. Montessori’s books is entitled “The Absorbent Mind.”

What are “Sensitive Periods”?

Montessori’s name for age periods when children show unusual capabilities in acquiring particular skills. A modern name for this phenomenon might be “Periods of Specific Maturation Aptness.”

What are some examples of sensitive periods?

The sensitive period for precise movement and coordination is 2 ½ to 4, writing is between 3 ½ to 4 ½, words leading to reading and numbers is 4 to 5, and social graces is age 3 to 6.

What is the Montessori concept of “Freedom”?

Long ago in Europe a visitor viewing a Montessori Class said to a young student, “Isn’t this the school where children are free to do as they like?” To which the child responded, “I don’t know about that, sir, but this is the school where we like what we do.”

Too often freedom is misunderstood by parents as permissiveness, lack of control and standards, and they envision rooms filled with activities where children are turned loose to freely follow their every whim.

“Freedom” in the Montessori concept is a goal, and not a starting point. Within every class, there are standards of behavior and ground rules to be followed. With consistent direction, children gradually receive freedom of movement. Freedom is granted as children prove themselves capable and independent, gradually they respond to freedom of discovery, and freedom of thought. They are free to work independently, or in groups, free to choose, therefore accepting the responsibility to carry through the task to its completion, with order, sequence,

and logic. The goals for accomplishment include self-expression, free will, and voluntary choice, which is the result of inner sensibility.

A free child or adult is one who has developed his potential, and who prefers to work out problems for himself. He is one who is capable of asking for and receiving help when necessary. An undisciplined or unskilled child is not free, but a slave to his immediate desires and is excessively dependent upon others.

What is the Montessori concept of “Discipline?”

The Montessori concept of discipline is an “inner discipline” control, which the child develops over his own behavior through his interest in Montessori materials. Dr. Montessori noted that many so-called undisciplined children were really frustrated by the lack of proper stimulation and would become happier and self-controlled after a period of time in a Montessori class.

At what age should a child enter a Montessori Class?

The curriculum is sequentially planned for a three-year period and is designed for children aged three to six. The ideal time for a child to enter the Preschool Program is age 2 ½ to 3 ½.

Do all children adjust well to the Montessori Method?

A well-trained Montessori Directress is sensitive and acutely aware of children’s various needs. She is understanding and patient as she directs the child’s activities, knowing that in most cases given time and involvement in work, proper adjustment will be made.

Parents also have an important role. If a child has three or more hours of learning experience each day at school, he will need free time for play activities at home. It is important that he is not forced at home to do what he has just finished at school. Children who are being pressured at home will use the school as an escape and be interested only in playing.

How can parents help their children receive the most from the Montessori method?

Parents should have healthy attitudes toward learning and should express an interest and enthusiasm in the child’s activities and accomplishments.

Parents can support school experience by giving their children standards for behavior, opportunities for verbal expansion, and conversational self-expression. Parents can afford opportunities for the growth of independence in keeping with the age and capability of the individual child.

If a parent wishes to carry on some Montessori-like activities, this can be done in the form of practical life exercises. The child can be encouraged to dress himself, care for his own toys and possession, and help in household activities such as setting the table, washing and drying dishes, sweeping the floor, etc.

For broadened cultural expansion developing the child’s awareness and enjoyment, camping trips, visits to the zoo, and children’s play and concerts are available.

What happens to children who transfer from a Montessori class into public schools?

The Montessori philosophy is based upon preparing children for life. If the Montessori experience has been successful, the child has had opportunities through which he becomes eager to learn, self-disciplined, aware of his interests, strengths and weaknesses, plus filled with motivational attitudes and perseverance. He has developed proper study habits and is creative in his use of time and materials. He has learned how to adapt to life situations, therefore, adjusting himself in rewarding and self-fulfilling ways.

Some parents like to have their children evaluated and advanced a grade, after leaving a Montessori school, while other parents prefer to keep their child at their own age level, providing broadened experiences in music, drama, sports, and hobby activities. Much depends upon the school and the child, and each situation must be evaluated separately.

What are the objectives to be developed within the child?

1. A favorable, positive attitude toward learning and toward school. Initial school experiences, unless carefully designed in keeping with psychological developments and interests of the child, can produce negative attitudes and lasting distaste for learning and study.
2. Habits and skills are essential in becoming an efficient student. These basics include the development of habits of concentration, order, initiative, creative self-expression, cooperation, and persistence.
3. Self-confidence as an independent learner. If a child lacks confidence that he can achieve, he lacks the courage to try. Montessori classes provide appropriately designed learning tasks and materials geared to each child's level of learning readiness, which assure success and the consequent rewarding sense of achievement which prompts farther effort.
4. Ability to perceive clearly. Clear concepts of the world in which the child lives constitute the foundations of further learning. A clear mental grasp of objects (similarities and differences) in the child's environment sharpens his interest, thus awakening internal motivation.

AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY

Organized in 1960, the American Montessori Society is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting better education for all children through teaching strategies consistent with the Montessori system and the incorporation of the Montessori method into the framework of American education.

A self-supporting membership organization comprised of schools (public, private and parochial), teachers, administrators and interested individuals, the Society has been the mainstay of the revival of Montessori education in America and acts as a clearing house for information and data on Montessori education. It approves courses meeting its standards for training teachers in Montessori strategies in different parts of the country.

THE JEFFERSON CITY MONTESSORI SOCIETY

The Jefferson City Montessori Society, Inc., and Children's House (now Moreau Montessori School) were organized in 1972 by a group of parents concerned with quality education for their preschool children. In 1975, the school was located at 1212 East High Street in a church building donated to the Society. In 1985, the school moved to 524 Schumate Chapel Road, a ranch style home in Jefferson City. In July 2000, the School moved to the "Old Moreau Heights School Building" at 900 Moreau Drive. The school changed its name to Moreau Montessori School and expanded to three classrooms. The move was made to allow for expansion to meet the needs of a community with growing interest in the Montessori philosophy. Volunteer work by parents and friends of the Society is imperative. Improvements made in this facility represent the support and participation of Society parents.

The school, operated under the auspices of the Jefferson City Montessori Society, Inc., is an organization composed of parents and other friends of Montessori children. The Society is a non-profit corporation with the following objectives:

1. To establish and maintain schools in which the Montessori approach to education is used.
2. To teach, counsel and otherwise instruct children of all ages according to the pedagogical principles and by means of the apparatus of the Montessori approach.
3. To provide all necessary suitable and advisable material and spiritual resources that implement the promulgation of the Montessori approach to education including, specifically, if not by way of limitation, providing and equipping schools, training teachers, promoting research, supplying a speaker's bureau, maintain an information center, conducting adult orientation courses and study groups, and promoting ideas that continue the tradition of Maria Montessori.

Board of Directors:

The Society is governed by the Society's by-laws and by a four-member Board of Directors. The purpose of the Board of Directors is to establish school policy and administer the program. When a vacancy occurs, board members are elected by the Society members at the annual meeting held in the spring. Regular board meetings are held on the designated day of each quarter of the year. Corporation members (parents) are encouraged to contact any board member with general questions about the school. In matters related to classroom operation, school policies, discipline, etc., parents need to speak to the Directress, Lorie Steele.

MOREAU MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY

THE PROGRAMS

Half-day: 8:30-11:30 a.m., 3- or 5-day program

In a richly prepared environment, the young child has the opportunity to absorb a multitude of information progressing at his own rate. The Montessori materials encourage the child to develop and expand his knowledge from a concrete foundation in practical life and sensorial experiences to abstract knowledge in math, language and cultural studies.

Full-day: 7:30–5:30p.m., 3- or 5-day program

The full-day program follows the same programs as the half-day program with early morning and afternoon hours featuring supplemental Montessori activities. Naptime is provided if needed. The elementary program provides an enriched offering of Montessori materials to the child who has progressed beyond the early childhood Montessori materials.

Summer Enrichment Program: 7:30 a.m. - 5:30p.m., 5-day program

Three, 4-week sessions are available to children ages 2-12. A child may be enrolled in one, or a combination of sessions including full summer. The courses of study include nature studies, geography, botany, zoology, Mortensen math, and cultural studies. Contact the office for specific dates and fees.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Children

Preschool and Kindergarten: Children must have reached their birthday prior to September 1 for admittance to the Preschool programs. Since a balance of ages in the classroom is desirable, the Directress shall have the final decision regarding enrollment and placement. Children who have turned five years of age by July 1 may be admitted to the kindergarten program. Other children with fifth birthdays after July 1 must have the KIDS test administered by the public school for consideration in the kindergarten program.

Elementary Program: Parents of elementary aged children are asked to provide academic records from their former school.

Medical Records/Health Forms: Completed health forms must be on file with the school.

Parents

Volunteer: Volunteer work in a variety of ways enables us to offer an affordable tuition rate. Your participation also enables your child to witness your care and concern for his/her school environment and the quality of his/her education program.

PARENT INFORMATION

Food Donation: Families will be asked to donate food items for food preparation activities from time to time throughout the year. You may be asked to bring such items as frozen juice, hard-boiled eggs, cheese, bananas, etc. During the year, a family may average one request per month.

Parent Education: For your child to derive optimum benefits from his classroom experiences, parents need to be aware of the Montessori Philosophy and Method. There are many types of parent education provided.

1. Parent Teacher Conferences are held during the year so that parents and teachers can review the work of the class.
2. Open Houses are held during the year so that parents may get a closer look at learning materials, equipment and their use.
3. A lending Library of additional materials is located in the school office for use by the parents.
4. A newsletter and other parent bulletins will be distributed to keep our families informed about school activities, projects initiated by the Society, articles on timely issues and other related information.

Parent-Teacher Conferences: Conferences for parents and teachers will be held twice a year (see School Calendar for specific dates). Classes will NOT be held on conference days. Parents will be responsible for signing up for a specific time on conference days. A conference sign-up sheet is posted at school at least one week prior to conference days.

Observation of Classroom: Observation is another important element of the Montessori program. Observations should be scheduled with the office at least one week in advance. Parents should allow at least six weeks from the first day of a child's enrollment before requesting observations. This initial period of adjustment is necessary for the child's orientation to the environment, the teaching staff, and classmates.

We realize that all observers wish to gain as much as possible from their observation and that they also wish to maintain the level of courtesy held by the children. Certain adult ground rules have been established to aid in the success of the visit, and a copy of these rules will be given after a parent has scheduled a time for observation. A time limit of twenty minutes is adequate for parent observation of the school environment and class activity.

Communications:

Newsletter: Throughout the year, the newsletter is your primary source of information. Please read it carefully and pay special attention to the calendar of events. We encourage parents to submit items of interest for publication in the newsletter. Please direct all items to the office.

Notices in Family Mailboxes: Sometimes special notices, materials, health information or other messages are sent home via parent mailboxes. To be certain you receive such notices, check your mailbox near the entrance every day. If you have a carpool or other designated driver, please make sure they check your mailbox for any messages.

TUITION AND FEES

See current tuition schedule in parent information packet.

Discounts: There will be a 5% discount for the second (or more) child in a family. Discounts will be based on the lowest tuition being paid.

Late Fees:

Tuition is DUE on the 1st of the month for that month. Any tuition or fees due and not paid by the 10th of the month will result in a \$25 late fee charge. Parents will then be notified by mail, called and warned, and if payment in full is not forthcoming by the 15th, the child will not be admitted into school on the 15th of said month.

If payment in full is received after the 10th and by the 15th (at time of arrival at school) the \$50 late fee should be included with the tuition payment. If you fail to include this late tuition fee charge, you will be billed for it.

Late Fee Charge: A \$20 per 15-minute late fee will be charged for students who stay after 11:30 for morning students, and after 5:30 p.m. for all day students. There will be no grace period allowed. Please cooperate in the matter; the teachers also have families to go home to.

Late Charge Billed: Late charges will be accumulated and billed as of the 25th of each month. The bill will be sent through the mail. These charges include late pick-up of children, late tuition fees, etc.

SCHOOL RULES

Arrival and Dismissal:

Arrival: Please make your child's arrival to school consistent. Try to establish a familiar routine, which can ease separation.

Dismissal: All children must be picked up by a parent, carpool driver, or other designated driver. If a relative or friend is picking up your child, please let our staff know via a written note or telephone call. If an emergency arises, a telephone call to our office will alert staff that other plans will be made for the child's transportation from school.

Classroom Ground Rules:

1. Fighting is not permitted.
2. Indoor water activities require wearing aprons.
3. Painting activities require wearing aprons.
4. Mats or trays are used for each exercise.
5. Activities should be returned to shelves in nearly the same condition as they were when taken off.
6. Children are not to interfere with other children's work.
7. Children are expected to use quiet voices in school.
8. Running is not permitted in the classroom.
9. The children shall not do any activities that have not been introduced to them.
10. Gum is not permitted inside the classroom.
11. Toys should only be brought from home on Show and Tell day (Friday).

Naptime:

Children enrolled in the full-day program will be encouraged to take a rest in the afternoon. Children who have not reached their fifth birthday by July 31st will nap in the afternoon. They will need a blanket, pillow and “lovey” or stuffed animal brought from home. Please place the child’s name on any items brought from home.

Show and Tell:

Show and Tell days are on Friday every week. The children are allowed to share something special from home if they wish. We hope the parents will encourage books, educational materials, or objects collected from nature. Toys are not allowed in the classroom except on Show and Tell days.

Birthday Celebrations:

You are invited to help celebrate your child’s birthday at school. Please contact the Directress at least three days prior to the birthday. She will be able to advise you on the number of students to plan for, exact time, and any other arrangements. If you wish, a simple treat of fruit, cheese, nuts, or other nutritious snacks may be shared. Too many sweets induce hyperactivity and therefore are not recommended.