



# Parent Handbook

## Policies & Procedures

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## Mission Statement

Our Mission at Just Montessori Inc. is to educate the child based on the principles of the Montessori philosophy; "higher learning". We are committed to creating a warm learning environment, while focusing on the independence, self-discipline and confidence; inspiring personal and academic excellence within each child.

## Educational Goals

At Just Montessori we aim to provide high-quality, comprehensive education that fosters your child's love of learning and addresses the whole child academically, emotionally, and socially. The Montessori curriculum varies by program; however the goals for our school are consistent:

- To enter a partnership with parents in the education of their children
- To lead children toward mastery of individually identified intellectual, social, physical, and daily life skills
- To foster in the children deep and persistent curiosity that will lead to lifelong pursuit of knowledge
- To help children develop self-confidence
- To assist each child develop a habit of concentration
- To instill in each child a sense of personal responsibility for the world in which we live
- To spark in our children wonder, imagination, and joy

## Family Commitment

Parents are a fundamental part of the well-being of our school and of a successful educational experience for their child. As such, we have the expectation that all members of the school community participate and support the school whenever possible. It is the hope and expectation of Just Montessori that parents make every effort to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we aim to help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education. Additionally, we expect parents to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook and other school publications, including our regular email communications. There are committees to assist in special programming and to help the school meet long-term goals. Teachers value the assistance and participation of parents in the classroom and in adventures beyond the classroom.

# ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

## Admission Guidelines

To be considered for enrollment at Just Montessori, children must be at least 2.9 years of age and potty trained. Enrollment preference will be given to families with a firm commitment to Montessori philosophy. Classes are multi-age, and the school will make every reasonable effort to balance each class with respect to age and gender.

## Admission Process

**Tour and observation.** Though not required, a tour of our facility is recommended. During this tour, you will meet our teachers, and will have the opportunity to observe a classroom “in action.”

**Application.** Interested families are encouraged to submit a completed application form accompanied by a \$50 non-refundable fee per family. When the application and fee are received, an interview appointment will be made.

**Parent and Student Meeting.** Once a completed application is received, a meeting will be scheduled with you and your child. This meeting is an informal way for prospective parents and the school representatives to become acquainted with each other and to share pertinent information. Your child will meet with a teacher and you (along with your spouse, partner, or other adult guardians) will meet with our Head of School. Children will explore the Montessori classroom materials with the guidance of a classroom lead teacher; children typically will visit a classroom a half hour.

**Enrollment.** If accepted and space is available, Just Montessori will notify you via email regarding the admissions decision along with the contract. Signed contracts, along with an enrollment deposit are due back to the office within 14 days to hold your child’s spot. If your child is accepted but there are no openings, he or she will be placed in a waiting pool until an opening exists.

## Student Success and Meeting Student Needs

The Montessori environment is unique. It cultivates an inner discipline that is the foundation for further learning and social development. Occasionally the learning style of an individual child is not compatible with the climate of the Montessori classroom. If the Lead Teacher becomes concerned about the suitability of the Montessori class for your child, she will contact you to set up a conference.

We want every child to experience the satisfaction and joy of a successful education. Generally, children adapt to the Montessori classroom within 60 days. If your child is not functioning successfully in the classroom, we will make educational recommendations to your family. If we believe that Montessori will not meet your child’s needs, we will recommend alternate environments to you and remove him/her from the class.

## Withdrawal

The Montessori School is dedicated to maintaining a safe, harmonious classroom environment for the optimum development of all our students. Parents of children with excessively disruptive or

hurtful behavior will be asked to seek professional assistance.

### **Enrollment Termination Process**

- The Lead Teacher will consult with the Director at the earliest opportunity to identify any at risk student.
- The Director will observe the student in the classroom and/or on the playground. She will provide the Lead Teacher with information and recommendations to address the child's needs.
- Staff will document specific incidents of behavior that are worrisome or problematic.
- If needs or problems are significant, the Director and Lead Teacher will meet with parents. Using observations about patterns of behavior, a plan will be created to address the needs of the child. The need for specific professional consultation may be identified. If the need for professional support is requested, parents are expected to respond in a timely manner to acquire those services.
- A written statement of goals and strategies for achieving goals will be created with parents, the School and consulting professionals. A date for a progress review will be set.
- If support from the family is not forthcoming and/or the problems are of such severity that the climate of the classroom and safety of the other children is in jeopardy, parents will be given a date by which the student will be removed from the classroom and parents will need to obtain alternate care for their child.
- Families that are asked to leave the school will be refunded any prepaid tuition and released from their contract. There will be no financial penalty.

### **Other Reasons for Withdrawal**

- The school operates on the tuition and fees paid for services. If a family's account is 60 days or more past due, the child will be withdrawn from the program until the account has been brought up to current status. Written notification of intent to withdraw a child shall be made at least 30 days prior to withdrawal.
- Children who are not potty trained will be withdrawn from the school.

Information about Programs and Tuition

### **Annual Tuition**

The tuition charged each year is for the academic year. A deposit is due upon enrollment or re-enrollment. This deposit is nonrefundable and held on account until the tuition is paid in full. This deposit may be held and applied to next year's deposit for enrollment or applied to your account. In the event you withdraw your child from the school, the deposit is nonrefundable. Please refer to your enrollment contract for additional information.

Once interview, paper work and acceptance documents are received, 10 postdated cheques, dated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month with first postdated cheque dated August 25<sup>th</sup>.

## SCHOOL POLICIES

### School Hours

Full Day (ages 3-6) – 7:30am to 5:30pm

Part Time Morning (ages 3-6) - 7:30am to 11:30am

Extended Kindergarten (age 5) -12:00pm to 5:30pm

The regular Montessori School year schedule is from the day after Labor Day through mid-June.

### Accounting Policies

#### Monthly Invoices & Receipts

Tuition installment payments are deposited by cheque or e-transfer to [info@justmontessori.ca](mailto:info@justmontessori.ca) on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. Monthly payments through e-transfers, will require the first and last months payments. Receipts will be handed out after each monthly deposit. Please make cheques payable to “Just Montessori Inc.”.

#### Late E-Transfer Payments

If an e-transfer payment is past due, the late fee penalty of \$60 per day will be added to the monthly tuition.

#### Returned or Bounced Cheque Accounts

If a cheque is returned or has bounced, a fee of 1.5% is added to the unpaid balance on the first day of the month, each month after the invoice was due. After 60 days past due, you will be required to withdraw your child.

## ATTENDANCE

Regular, punctual attendance is necessary for your child to receive the full benefit of the Montessori program. Parents should notify the school by 9 a.m. if a child is unable to attend school. Children with a contagious disease must be kept home for the health and safety of the other children. ***Please inform the office if your child contracts a contagious disease.*** More information can be found under the “Health Policies” section.

Daily attendance is vital for your child’s development. If a student must be away for any length of time for reasons other than illness, parents should contact the school in advance to discuss the situation.

Parents should be aware that taking their children out of school for vacation could be detrimental to their education. If a vacation is scheduled, parents should discuss with the Lead Teacher the educational experiences and activities that will be learned.

## Arrival and Dismissal

### Arrival:

When arriving at our school, parents should park in the designated parking stalls and enter the building using the main entrance and walk upstairs towards the classroom where a teacher will be waiting to greet you and your child

### Dismissal and Release of Children:

Please pick up your child at the designated time. If you will be late, please call the school. For children enrolled in the 7:30am-11:30am morning program, dismissal time is at 11:30am. For Full Day and Part Time Kindergarten students, the program time ends at 3:30pm and extended care dismissal is at 5:30pm. For children who are not picked up by 5:30pm, we charge a late fee of \$5 for each 15 minutes, or portion thereof, beyond our usual closing time.

For your child's protection, we will not release a child to someone other than a custodial parent or individuals designated on the Family Information Sheet unless written authorization is provided to the school. We will ask for photo identification of the person picking up your child. Authorization can be granted on the emergency information form, but make sure to include a note anytime changes in regular dismissal are made.

Please be sure to sign in when your child arrives and sign out when your child leaves the school. When your child arrives for the day, his/her arrival time will be recorded in our HiMama app. The departure time, also noted recorded in our HiMama app, will be recorded as the time you and your child leave the school grounds for the day. Staff members will be happy to discuss this process with you if you have any questions.

## Late Arrival

It is important that children arrive on time, as the beginning of the school day sets a tone for the classroom. Children who are rushed and arrive late may not be in the right frame of mind to begin their activities. We ask for your cooperation in ensuring that your child has the opportunity to begin his/her work at the start of class. Parents should not enter classrooms or disturb teachers once the day has begun. Children should arrive either before or promptly at 9:00am. If you are late more than five times, you may be asked to meet with the Director.

## School Closings

In the event of a snowstorm, weather emergency or unforeseen school closure, notification will be send to you through our HiMama app or via email.

## Health Policy

### Immunizations

According to Alberta Health, any child enrolling in childcare program for the first time must be adequately immunized, Exemptions to these requirements are granted for medical, religious and other objections, provided that the waiver forms are properly prepared, signed and delivered to school administrators. Forms for these exemptions are available at the local health department.



### **New COVID-19 Illness Policy – AHS Requirements**

- You are legally required to isolate for a minimum of **10 days** if you have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat that is not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition.
- The mandatory isolation period is 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.

### **Illness**

For the protection of all of the students at the school, the Director reserves the right to send a child home whose health (according to Department of Alberta Health guidelines) poses a threat to other children in the program. Any ill child should be kept home. Children should not be brought to school if they:

- Have vomited and/or diarrhea - please refrain from bringing your child to school until symptoms have subsided for at least 48 hours. (Subject to Change according to AHS regulations)
- Require more rest time than that provided by the program
- Are running a fever – please refrain from bringing your child to school until symptoms have subsided for at least 48 hours. (Subject to Change according to AHS regulations)
- Coughing persistently - please refrain from bringing your child to school until symptoms have subsided for at least 48 hours. (Subject to Change according to AHS regulations)
- Has a constant runny nose with green or yellow discharge – please refrain from bringing your child to school until symptoms have subsided for at least 24 hours.

In addition, if your child has a communicable disease e.g., mumps, strep, chicken pox, hepatitis, pneumonia, measles, rubella, scarlet fever, scabies, pertussis, haemophilus/influenza type b, encephalitis or meningitis you **must** report this to the school office.

All reports and data associated with serious diseases, such as HIV infection and AIDS, that are furnished by the Department of Alberta Health or a local health officer are confidential. These reports are made solely to the Director. Any further disclosure about a serious disease can only be made with written permission of the child's parent or guardian.

Additional information is available from head staff members concerning health issues and Alberta Health Department guidelines. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Hand washing:**

Children and staff wash their hands upon arriving daily. Children and staff wash their hands before eating, and after using the bathroom and blowing their noses.

**Handling bodily fluids:**

All staff members are trained in universal cleaning procedures to protect the children and themselves from possible contamination from bodily fluids

**Cleaning and sanitizing cots and equipment:**

Cots and sheets are washed and sanitized weekly. Equipment is regularly cleaned and sanitized to minimize the spread of disease.

**Controlling infection:**

The school uses disposable paper products to control the spread of disease. If the staff notices a child showing symptoms of an infectious disease, we send the child home immediately. When waiting for parent/guardian pick up, the child will be removed from the other children and be in a separate room under staff supervision. The school will contact the Alberta Health Department to discuss course of recommended action for this particular illness.

**Medications Administration:**

Any medicine that is brought to school must be given to the teacher. It **cannot** be kept in your child's bag or lunch box. There are three things you must know about how we handle medications. These policies are for the protection of your child.

- A medication authorization form must be filled out, which includes the length of time the medication is to be dispensed. These medication authorization forms (available in each classroom) must be completed and signed before the teacher can give your child medicine. One form needs to be completed for each medication your child is taking.
- Give the medication to an adult. No medications are to be in lunch boxes. If you want your child to have vitamins or nonprescription drugs, please administer them at home.
- The medication to be dispensed must be in its original, labeled pharmacy container with your child's name on it. This rule is for clarification in case of an allergic reaction and to help prevent any mistakes in medications.

**Health Resources.**

For more general information call Health Link at 811.

**Child Safety****Parent Notifications**

Parents or their authorized emergency contacts will be notified immediately of any accidents, injuries or illnesses. Parents or their authorized emergency contacts will have 45 minutes time to

pick up their child once contacted by Just Montessori Inc. staff member. Behavioral incidents will be communicated on a case by case basis depending on the seriousness of the incident. The classroom teacher will determine this and will communicate with you either immediately by phone or at the end of the school day for less serious matters

### **Child Abuse & Neglect**

All schools, child care centers, physicians and others who work with children are required by law to inform Child Protective Services at the Department of Human Services of any suspected abuse or neglect of children. By law, a suspicion of child abuse generally means that the reporter has “reasonable cause to believe” or “reasonable cause to know or suspect” that a child is being maltreated physically, emotionally or mentally.

### **Employee Screening**

All employees are subject to Vulnerable Criminal Record Checks at the Edmonton Police Station to be screened for abuse and child neglect.

### **Building Security and Emergency Preparation**

Fire Safety inspection is done on a yearly basis. Just Montessori conducts fire drills regularly throughout the year. We follow safety and emergency plans that are reviewed on an annual or as needed basis.

### **Visitors**

We welcome and encourage visits to the school from parents, outside teachers, prospective families, and the larger community. Please call the school to make arrangements.

### **Harassment**

All children must be free from harassment and bullying in our school. Children may not be cruel and/or abusive to each other in any way in our environment. If you believe an incident of harassment has occurred with your child, please report it immediately to your child’s teacher. The school will investigate and take appropriate action.

### **Weapons**

No weapons of any sort – including play or pretend guns, knives, and similar items – are allowed.

### **Communication**

Most of the communication coming from the school will be disseminated electronically. It is essential that we have your email address and that you keep us current if that address changes.

***Please make certain to read the monthly electronic newsletter as it contains important information about your child’s classroom.***

### **School Calendar**

The calendar of events for the school year is available on our website: [www.justmontessori.ca](http://www.justmontessori.ca)  
Changes and updates are made monthly on the calendar and are also communicated to you through our Himama app or email.

### **Voicemail**

The main telephone numbers has voice mail capabilities. Voicemail is also convenient for leaving us after-hour messages. We check voice mail regularly throughout the day.

### **Email**

In our ongoing efforts to be more conscientious in the use of resources, most communication between the school and home will be made electronically. All regular correspondence from the school will be sent via email. If you are not receiving our emails please send us your correct email address to [info@justmontessori.ca](mailto:info@justmontessori.ca)

All Lead Teachers and administrative staff members have an e-mail address. Questions, suggestions and other communications can be initiated via the Internet using a standard addressing format. Simply put the staff person's first and last name in front of “[@justmontessori.ca](mailto:@justmontessori.ca)” (e.g., [christineshin@justmontessori.ca](mailto:christineshin@justmontessori.ca) for Christine Shin).

### **Website**

Just Montessori has its own website. General information, the calendar of events, important forms, and other useful Montessori links can be found at our site:

[www.justmontessori.ca](http://www.justmontessori.ca)

### **Monthly Electronic Newsletter**

You will be sent the monthly newsletter electronically at the end of each month. This important communication provides information on all school-wide activities, events, updates, volunteer activities, etc. as well as provides information on the specific activities of your child's classroom. Please be sure to notify the office if you are not receiving our newsletters. ***Please be sure to provide the office with your updated email address.***

### **Social Media**

Just Montessori provides information about school events as well as other items of interest to the community via an active Facebook page. We encourage you to ‘Like’ us on Facebook and to share our information with your community of family and friends.

### **Changes of address or emergency contact information**

Whenever you change your address, home phone, work phone or emergency notification information, be sure to let the classroom Lead Teacher know. In addition, be sure to notify the school office directly. Please do not rely on your child's Lead Teacher to update the office. It is only by alerting both the Lead Teacher and the office to any changes that you can be sure we will change all documentation throughout the school. This includes our Child Information Sheet, billing list, mailing lists and classroom files. Both the office and the teacher emergency records need to be up-to-date.

### **Problem resolution**

We believe that open communication and supportive relationships between home and school are imperative for the full development of the child. However, we know that we are all human and things don't always go perfectly to everyone's satisfaction. Occasionally there might be issues, misunderstandings, conflicts, or communication confusion between parents and the school. If you

have questions or concerns that you want to address, please start by contacting your child's classroom Lead Teacher. You may schedule a meeting if you wish. If you are not comfortable with the outcome of that meeting, you are encouraged to contact the Director.

At some point, the Lead Teacher may feel a need to meet with you about your child's development. If so, she will arrange a meeting time that is convenient for all parties. She may request that the Director attend that meeting.

## Clothing and Footwear

### Clothing and Extra Items

Student will need to wear uniforms selected by Just Montessori. Order form will be provided at the time of registration and interview. Students should be sure to have a full set of extra clothing, including socks and underwear. Please put all items in a plastic bag labeled with the child's name.

### Outside Wear

All students go outside most days. Outerwear should be appropriate to the weather. Appropriate shoes for school are sneakers or other casual shoes that may get dirty. The best sneakers for outdoor activities have velcro ties. Clogs, party shoes, or open-toed sandals are not appropriate for safe outside play. When there is snow or mud, boots are required. When it is very cold, snow pants, mittens, and hats are required.

### Indoor Wear

All children wear indoor shoes while in the classroom for several reasons. The Montessori method recognizes the child's need for quiet and order in the classroom to allow him or her greatest opportunity for concentrated work. The opportunity to take off and put on shoes increases their level of independence and dressing skills. The children use mats for a great deal of floor work and indoor shoes help to maintain the cleanliness of the environment, alleviating mud and dirt being tracked into the classroom with street shoes. We ask you to provide indoor dress shoes and running shoes to be kept at school.

To avoid confusion and prevent loss of clothing, ***please label all garments with your child's name.*** The Lost and Found clothing will be donated at the end of the school year in June.

## Nutrition: Lunches and Snacks

Nutritious food is essential for young, growing bodies. We encourage parents to establish sound eating habits at an early age. Please note that all children will be seated when eating and drinking in the classroom.

### Lunches

At Just Montessori, parents are responsible for their child's lunches. All children staying for lunch need to bring a lunchbox each day. Please provide meals that include the important basic food groups. **Please be sure to send nutritious lunches your child will eat and enjoy. Please do not send candy, pop or sugary foods.** We discourage prepackaged foods (i.e. Lunchables, Hot Pockets, Chef Boyardee, etc.). We will send your child's leftovers home so you can gauge what and how much your child is eating. We cannot reheat food. You may use thermos bottle if you wish.

### Snacks:

Just Montessori will provide crackers and milk for the morning snack, parents provide their own

snacks in afternoon. Suggestions include items like fresh fruit, crackers and cheese, pretzels, muffins, yogurt, or vegetables and dip. Please ask your child's teacher directly if you have any questions.

## Naps and Quiet Time

Preschool aged children benefit from scheduled periods of rest. This rest may take the form of actual napping or a quiet time for children staying all day. At Just Montessori all children under four are required to rest. Children who do not fall asleep will have a quiet rest time that may involve but is not limited to looking at books, listening to music, or other such quiet activities. Children who do not rest and attend full day are enrolled in the extended day program. Naps are available to all children if they need or want rest during the day. Please be aware that no beverages are provided during this time.

## Outdoor Play

Our program is designed to include outdoor play in all seasons. Students who stay in school all day need fresh air, exercise and free time on the playground. For our preschool students, we maintain a ratio of one adult for every 8 students. Therefore, we are not able to have a staff member stay inside with one or two children who are sent to school with a cold, lingering ear infection, etc. Your child should be well enough to participate fully at school if he/she is in attendance.

In the winter, our preschoolers play outside as long as the wind chill factor is above -22 degrees; if it is below that temperature, they will stay inside. Students may stay inside in cold at the discretion of the teacher. Please be sure your child has appropriate clothing for outdoor play: sturdy, warm and easy to put on. Also, label ... label ... label. Please label everything you send to school. Children often do not recognize their own clothing. Labeling helps your child and us to sort out the myriad items that come into the School each day. Use names, not initials, and mark in an easily-read place.

## Personal Possessions

Children often want to bring favorite possessions to school, but we ask parents to discourage this practice. We welcome books, items made by the child, or objects related to culture, science, or nature. Sharing these items with other children in the class will become a part of the classroom learning experience. We do not allow children to bring toys, playthings and electronic devices including cell phones into the classroom. If your child asks to bring a toy or other personal property, simply explain that such items are not allowed at school. Please do not send valuables, including money and label all items that are sent to school. We do allow children to bring a comfort object with them to nap time and that can either be kept in the school bag or kept with the nap blanket depending on whether the item will travel to and from school.

## Potty Training Policy

To attend Just Montessori, your child must be fully potty-trained. This means that your child consistently spends at least three days without an accident. If your child is not potty-trained by August, please let us know and we can withdraw your enrollment.

## **Child Custody Issues**

The Montessori School is dedicated to the total development of each unique child. We believe that all children need a loving, supportive family. When a family separates, it is especially difficult for the children. Their loyalties are torn as they love and need both parents. The school will be supportive, open, and welcoming to both parents. We will remain neutral in conflicts between parents. School records, conferences, meeting information, educational materials and similar items are available to both parents. Parents should try to schedule joint conferences with the teacher, but accommodations can be made for separate conferences. Parents, regardless of the custody arrangement, are entitled to information about the activities of the school and access to certain records. These records include: medical, dental and school records, day care provider's records, and notification of meetings regarding the child's education. Billing information is made available to any person who has signed the financial contract.

The school will not limit a parent's access to his/her child unless there is a court order on file in the child's records at the school limiting or specifying particular conditions for a parent's access to the child.

## **Academic Readiness**

Academic readiness is not an issue at Just Montessori. In the program your child will not be evaluated as one of the criteria for enrollment. Whether your child knows colors or numbers is irrelevant. Of greater importance, the teacher is concerned about the whole child: his/her ability to communicate and to cooperate, and eagerness to accept and seek out new experiences.

## **Special Services**

Occasionally a child may evidence the need for special services. These needs may be physical, developmental or psychological. We have been working with children for a long time. We are trained to spot needs that affect the child's ability to learn and socialize successfully in a classroom setting. We will recommend evaluation and professional consultation. The school will advise the parents to make such arrangements. We make every attempt to recommend and support services contracted for students in need at within the school.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS**

### **New Student Orientation**

The first days of the new school year are devoted to the children who are new to our environment. For new Primary students, one day, from 9am to 3:30pm are just for the new students. Orientation is a crucial component in your child's successful introduction to the class. Please plan vacations, appointments, etc., around these important days.

## Parent Information Nights

At the beginning of each year each classrooms holds an informational meeting for new and returning parents. These parent-only evenings are an opportunity to explain the school and classroom plans, supervision as well as policies and procedures for the new year. Parents have an opportunity to get acquainted, meet all classroom staff, and learn about the specifics of their child's classroom. The Lead Teacher and teaching assistants will answer questions about field trips, classroom procedures and volunteer opportunities.

## Student Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in the Fall and early Spring. Parents are given the opportunity to select a convenient time for the conference. Lead Teachers are available for special conferences as necessary. Speak directly with your child's teacher to make arrangements. We believe good communication between home and school is essential to the best learning environment for the child. Head teachers will periodically make personal phone calls throughout the school year.

## Open Houses

Children love to share their experiences, so this evening is set aside for the children to show parents and other family members around their classroom. It is always a very special evening for your scholar. The evening begins at 5:30 pm. We are out the door at 7:30pm because we appreciate your need to be home in the evening as a family. You will be notified via email for the dates of your child's family open houses.

## Field Trips and Going Out Excursions

We try to give ample notice for field trips. Notification of a field trip is given to the parents at least one week prior to an off-campus event. If you wish to have alternative care for your child for the duration of the outing, you will be responsible for making these arrangements.

The safety and protection of our students is a critical concern to Just Montessori. Off-campus trips create potential hazards that require us to take special precautions. The School reserves the right to refuse to be responsible for children off campus when past behavior patterns indicate an inability to follow directions and basic rules. If we are concerned about the safety of a child based on observed behavior, development and/or maturity, we may require the parent of the child to take sole responsibility for their well-being during the trip. Lead Teachers and supervisory staff can exclude a child from an outing if this parental supervision is not available.

Privately contracted busing services are utilized for student transportation for field trips. All parent volunteers who accompany children on field trips must be screened for child abuse.

## Birthdays



***The Birthday Walk Around the Sun.*** Each child is honored in a special celebration called “The Birthday Walk,” an international Montessori tradition. Parents share in this important occasion by helping their child select photographs from each year of her life and by helping him/her prepare a written history of milestones reached and fun times had during each year. These milestones are shared as the child walks around the “sun,” once for each year celebrated. Parents are invited to participate in this beautiful ceremony with their child.

## **Music Concerts**

### **Christmas Concert**

Each year our students at Just Montessori present a musical program for their families. You will be notified via email once a date has been set.

### **Spring Concert**

This annual special performance is the opportunity for us to showcase the wonderful music program we have at Just Montessori. All children participate in this concert, performing with their voices, musical instruments, and dancing. You will be notified via email once a date has been set. All the children participate, and we welcome all of our families and their guests to attend. If your family plans will prevent your child from participating, please let your child’s teacher know so another student can be assigned to take your child’s place.

## **A GUIDE TO THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM**

### **Principles of the Classroom**

The most important time for learning is the period between birth and six years of age. Children are eager to learn from new people and experiences. They absorb all the environment has to offer and it is our responsibility to ensure the world they experience is rich, safe, nurturing, and intelligent. The foundation of self-esteem and all future learning is constructed during these early years and Just Montessori programs are designed to take advantage of this powerful, formative period. The program is our fundamental, core Montessori program that runs five days a week (Monday through Friday) from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. The preschool program offers your child a step toward independence in an environment specially created for the developing young learner. This happy and intelligent setting offers your child an opportunity to develop strong social skills as well as explore language, music, practical life skills, art, math, geography, science, culture and large motor activities.

In the classroom, your child will be introduced to many different concepts and will learn both through observing and through direct interaction with our beautifully crafted materials.

### **The Three Year Cycle**

The Montessori program is a three year cycle. Children begin at three years of age. We have found children adjust and access the Montessori environment much more successfully when they attend five days a week. Pre-school aged children especially need consistency. They bond socially more readily with the other children. They also tend to progress through the full spectrum of materials in the five day format. Developmentally it is beneficial for children to experience the full three year cycle. Children move into the extended day program at age four or five depending on their developmental readiness.

### Practical life

Dr. Montessori structured exercises for the classroom to help children satisfy the need for meaningful activity. We refer to these as “exercises of practical life.” They include those daily activities which adults perform to maintain the environment and promote cohesive human relations. The Montessori practical life area is designed to allow the child to practice skills that will lead to greater independence and self-control. This area provides the child with the opportunity to engage in tasks associated with the real world of home, garden, and self-care. This work allows the child to develop concentration and attention to detail. Fine motor skills are honed, as the child gains a sense of satisfaction that comes from completing a task. They develop a deep joy for caring for themselves, others, and their environment. There are four distinct groups of practical life exercises:

- ***Care of the person.*** Children learn hand washing, fastening buttons, zipping, tying, combing, and other personal hygiene skills. First children have to take care of themselves, and then reach out to the environment. We help guide the children to gradually develop independence from their parents.
- ***Care of the environment.*** With these exercises, children take responsibility for the space they use and enjoy. The Montessori classroom is kept clean and tidy and the children are, in large part, responsible for its maintenance. They delight in washing windows, tables and chairs, sweeping floors, dusting shelves, polishing, and gardening. In addition, each child is responsible for returning his/her materials to the shelf upon completion.
- ***Grace and Courtesy.*** Through classroom activities and modeling by teachers, children develop the necessary skills for conversation, conflict resolution, greeting, and thanking. By participating in Grace and Courtesy exercises, children learn to positively interact and to problem solve.
- ***Concentration and Coordination.*** The exercises in practical life are among the first presented. These preliminary exercises include spooning, pouring, using tools, opening and closing bottles, folding and matching. These lessons help the child develop his/her gross and fine motor skills as well as develop concentration. In addition, there are groups of exercises that involve the analysis and control of movement to facilitate coordination. There are exercises that are essentially designed for this purpose, such as walking on the line and the silence game.

### Sensorial Exercises

Maria Montessori believed that nothing exists in the intellect that was not first experienced in the senses. The materials in the sensorial area are designed to help children sharpen their senses by isolating particular qualities such as size, shape, composition, color, flavor, smell, pitch, texture and weight. Each of the materials in this area is autodidactic and allows the child to work at their own pace with minimal interruption from the teacher. Children enjoy working with these materials repeatedly and often develop their own variations on the standard lesson.

### Language

Language is an integral part of the entire Montessori preschool curriculum. Stories, songs, poems along with conversations with adults and peers help children increase their vocabulary and develop oral language skills. Written language is taught through a specific progression of lessons that engage the senses—children learn letters and sounds through seeing, hearing, and touching them—and through immersion in a linguistically rich classroom environment. Children first learn the phonetic sound of each letter. Using inviting, hands-on materials the children progress by classifying objects based on their sounds and then begin putting these sounds together to create words. Once they have learned to create their own words, reading follows quickly. The children work with increasingly more challenging materials. As they progress with their reading, the focus turns to comprehension and grammar. With the development of language, children develop a greater ability to organize their thoughts and express themselves.

### **Mathematics**

The materials in the math area are designed for the development of a concrete understanding of abstract mathematical concepts. The hands on materials in the math area help the child sequentially progress from basic comparisons of different quantities and their numeric symbols, through addition and subtraction and on to the combination of numbers, multiplication, division and fractions.

### **Science**

The objective of science in the Montessori classroom is to develop each child’s natural sense of wonder and invite them to find answers to some of their “Why’s”. Each classroom contains many materials with which to explore various aspects of science.

### **Geography and Cultural Studies**

Maria Montessori believed it was important to study what humans have in common to instill in the child a greater sense of belonging to the universe. By examining the similarities and differences of humans around the globe, we build a sense of connection to all human beings. Children in the Montessori classroom begin by looking at the world as a whole. Children are first introduced to the ideas of air, land, water, and continents. They then begin the study of local regions, cultures, and geography of the United States and all the continents. Colorful puzzles provide extensive hands-on exploration of world geography. Boxes containing a variety of items from each continent give the children a concrete link to peoples in other lands. Students at The Montessori School come from a variety of rich cultural backgrounds. This allows us a unique way to introduce students to other cultures and customs and to study countries in a variety of different ways.

### **Special Offerings**

Students also have experience with art, music, languages, and physical movement as part of the program. Regular singing, movement, and use of musical instruments is offered to all children in both large and small groups by our Music Teacher.

## **Full Day & Kindergarten Age (4-5)**

The Full day (age 4-5) & Kindergarten program is available to children who are in their second or third year of the program and are developmentally ready to do work in the afternoon. This program, which is in session from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm five days a week, is a natural extension of the student’s morning session. It allows children to continue the exploration begun in the

morning. The children work at their individual pace and progress toward more advanced materials. It is not a “drop-in” child care option. Admission to this program is based on the child’s development, not on chronological age. We evaluate the child’s ability to work successfully without a nap. This usually occurs when the child is between 4 and 5 years old, and often happens mid-year as a child demonstrates the developmental milestones that indicate readiness.

Instead of their school day ending at noon, the students continue to work with teachers until 3:00pm. During this time, the children build upon the activities of the morning and undertake projects and field trips that are typically too challenging for the youngest students.

Full day (age 4-5) & Kindergarten students stay in the same room with the same teacher and children and take on the leadership role in the Primary classroom community. This continuity is developmentally appropriate and beneficial to the child’s sense of security and well-being. Only the Full day (age 4-5) & Kindergarten students are in our Primary classrooms in the afternoon. Younger children are either napping or have gone home for the day. This opportunity for focused attention provides the perfect bridge to the elementary education. Full day (age 4-5) & Kindergarten, like all Montessori programs, emphasizes active rather than passive learning. Children learn by actively participating in their environment, mastering many skills, and experiencing explosive learning during this time. Like all other students, Full day (age 4-5) & Kindergarten students participate in music, language and cultural study, outdoor time, and other enrichment activities.

## Typical Daily Schedule

### 7:30 am –8:55 am

Before care and arrival. Children engaged in wide variety of activities and toys that include individual play, small group activities

### 9:00 am – 9:10 am

Circle time. Children get a chance to share about their weekend, night or day, We teach the calendar, weather and seasons during this time.

### 9:10 am - 11:20am

Independent Montessori Work time. The children are engaged in a wide variety of activities working individually, in small groups, or the whole group together. The teacher meets with individual or small groups of children throughout the morning. Children also participate in music time and snack.

### 11:20 am

The children put away materials, clean up, and prepare to go outside or to the gym

### 11:30 am

Outdoor play or gym class

### 12:00 pm

Prepare for lunch.

### 12:15 pm

Children begin lunch

### 12:45 pm

Children begin lunch clean up

1:00 pm

Younger children nap. Full Day (age 4-5) & Kindergarten children who no longer nap engage in the afternoon work period.

3:15 pm

Extended Day children put away materials and clean up. Napping children wake up from nap.

3:20 pm

Outdoor play or gym class

4:00 pm

Children in after school childcare program return indoors

4:10 pm -5:30 pm

Snack, after school activity/toy time

5:30pm

Pick up

## Positive Approaches to Discipline

Just Montessori grounds its entire program in the significant relationship between adult and child. A positive, supportive and loving bond promotes the child's self-esteem and sense of security. The role model provided by the adult teaches children positive problem-solving techniques and courtesy. Children are continuously taught how to solve problems, deal with frustration, and express feelings in a manner that is growth-producing and positive. Some examples of positive methods of discipline include:

- redirecting or distracting a child from the unacceptable activity to a constructive one
- planning ahead to prevent problems
- encouraging, teaching, and modeling appropriate behavior
- setting consistent clear rules
- talking to the child about the feelings he /she is having
- offering alternative solutions to the problem
- involving children in solving the problem
- ensuring a relationship between the behavior and the discipline method
- tailoring the method of discipline to the individual child
- removing the child from the source of conflict

Students who are disruptive or hurtful to others will be asked to reflect on their choices. Parents of

children with excessively disruptive or hurtful behavior will be asked to seek professional assistance. Parents may be required to remove their child from the class if his/her behavior significantly disrupts the harmony of the group. (See withdrawal and enrollment termination.)

## Naps

The primary students who stay for child care will rest from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. All children younger than four years of age will be required to rest during nap time. Children older than four who stay five days a week and do not take a nap are enrolled in the Full day (age 4-5) & Kindergarten program. Naps are available to all children as needed. Please send a lunch, small pillow, small blanket, crib sheet and change of clothing in a zip bag, along with any other “equipment” required to ensure your child's comfort while staying with us for the afternoon.

## Montessori “Work”

In a Montessori school all of the students’ activities are called work. By using the word this way, it does not denote something unpleasant and opposite from fun. To young children, their “work” is its own satisfaction. There is neither praise nor punishment. The urge to give too much praise is difficult even for an experienced teacher to suppress. But we try to remember this: whether you criticize or praise a child's work, you are evaluating the product without knowing how much effort was expended or even whether the child has developed his/her own opinion about it. The inequality between the child and adult is reflected in your response.

A more helpful approach is to comment on an actual attribute of the work. For instance, “I like the way you used this design to border your booklet.” Or, “I've noticed your addition work is becoming very accurate!” These kinds of statements encourage students to consider their own progress and begin to evaluate their own work with a critical eye. This allows them to move away from dependence on adult approval.

In our learning environment, regular discussions about correct behavior, courtesy and respect for others take place in the classroom as a part of instruction, not just as a response to a given negative behavior. Often, in traditional schools and at home, these lessons are given after the fact – when emotions are high, someone is injured and someone “must be punished.” Our approach does not eliminate all negative behavior, but it does give the teacher the opportunity to refer to the lesson. “Remember when we talked about walking carefully around someone's work?” Or, “I'll bet you remember the lesson about pushing in your chair without a sound.”

In our modern hyper-stimulated society, the Montessori teacher's job is challenging. The children must come to love their own efforts without immediate rewards and praise. The materials beckon to the children, but their satisfaction must come from within. This intrinsic reward is the most meaningful and long-lasting.

A 4-year-old lays out a felt mat and chooses a box of fabrics from the shelf. She arranges them carefully and begins to sort and make pairs – wool with wool, silk with silk. After adequate

exploration she puts on a blindfold and begins the process anew. Observing carefully, one can see the smile of satisfaction when like pairs are discovered and matched. What is most impressive is the calm, orderly manner of her work. Across the room a 3-year-old pours water from dainty pitchers slowly and carefully, watching the last drop as it clings to the spout. With the same sense of independence and determination he begins the task again, checking his tray for a spilled drop.

This atmosphere of calm and joyful order is usually the first impression a visitor experiences in a Montessori school.

When you visit a play group or day care center with children grouped according to age, you may be overwhelmed by the boisterous activity, running and loud voices. Or you will see the children all involved in an activity that demands silence and immobility. These choices are managed by the supervising adult.

In a Montessori classroom you will experience a clear sense of freedom, but you will also realize that freedom is attainable for the children only because the environment is carefully prepared and controlled in a different way. There are a few rules, but they are consistent and equitable. These young students learn not to disturb each other or to misuse the materials. They are shown how to select an exercise carefully, complete the procedure, repeat it as many times as desired, and replace it on the shelf as they found it. They learn that preparation and clean-up are part of the activity, not an adjunct. Within these limitations they have the opportunity to choose from every activity the teacher has presented to them.

Free play sounds like a similar concept, but in reality it can be limiting for children, especially those who have not developed concentration skills. Play-Doh, building blocks, Legos, paints, puzzles, Big Wheels and puppets may look exciting. But an observer will see children roaming from one activity to another, leaving toys strewn haphazardly, and eventually declaring that they have nothing to do. They may begin to interfere with other children simply because they have not developed enough self-control to handle their freedom. In a play school setting you will seldom see the children being allowed unlimited time and sufficiently challenging work to engage their concentration and intellectual energies.

Montessori students have the security of knowing that they each have exclusive use of the materials they have chosen for as long as they need them. Thus, one of the major conflicts in play between children is immediately eliminated. The child is satisfied because the work has value, challenge and purpose.

## The Adult Role

As adults entrusted with the lives of children, it is our obligation to help them develop their minds, enable them to use individual judgment, and learn how to contribute to society. It is up to us to keep alive their innate desire to learn.

The relationship between adult and child is fragile. We cannot think of ourselves solely as “teachers” or “parents” because we are often in an alternate role. We are guardians/custodians of the environment that prepares our children for the culture of today. This child/adult relationship is

based on respect and knowledge of the child. Give and take is not always on the side of the child or the adult, but rather both are learners. Both are moving toward self-perfection. By avoiding certain inner restrictions or attitudes, we can feel more competent and joyful in our relationships with children. Some of these hampering attitudes are:

- Lack of trust or belief in a child's abilities
- Arrogance, especially related to knowledge
- Lack of patience
- Need to be right or to always know the answer
- Need for immediate results
- Inclination to see wrong in others
- Dishonesty
- Pride

Children need our help. The cultural ideal is, too often, a few winners and many losers ... and always being in competition. Children learn to suppress their own inner drives very early. We parents and teachers are products of that same system. We have to learn not to lose patience, not to give in to anger, but rather to grow through our experiences with the children.

Balancing our love for our children with intelligence, resisting the urge to keep the child dependent, developing enough self-discipline and, when needed, detachment to allow growth are examples of the kind of intelligent, thinking love we want our children to experience. The teacher or parent who is in “need” of love or reaffirmation can undermine this process. Rigidity in our own attitudes can be a sign of unresolved inner conflict, which can be easily communicated to children. As they grow, children will force us to look inward as well as outward to find more knowledge.

*All adults working with children are in need of support. We can only make a definite difference in the lives of our children if we combine efforts, seek the same goals, and continue to respect the dignity and innate capability of every child. If we truly believe in the unlimited potential of the child, we realize the importance of every period of childhood development and the significance of the adult role in the process, not just in the achievements of your child or mine, but in the progress of humanity.*

Dr. Maria Montessori

## The Work Cycle

There are many features which characterize a secure, yet stimulating environment appropriate to the needs of a young child. Safety in the physical sense is a given. Ideally there is also an intangible quality or “feeling” that permeates the entire school, emanating from the staff and present in each



classroom, nurtured by the teacher. Montessorians seek to provide positive support, believing that the good within each child will flourish and develop. Dr. Montessori said, “Never speak ill of a child in his presence or in his absence.” She intuitively understood that even a slightly derogatory remark regarding an absent child sets a tone, no matter how unintentional, that could be damaging to the child. A positive emotional climate is the responsibility and mandate of the adult. To maintain that climate, the children gradually accept simple ground rules. We are not free to harm others or to disturb the work of others. Lessons involving grace and courtesy are implemented in daily life.

Dr. Montessori created an environment where certain characteristics of childhood were revealed that had not been previously observed. One phenomenon was the ability to work for long periods of time in concentrated activity. For this to occur, an unbroken cycle of three hours must be provided.

- 1) Many children will enter the class, choose something relatively simple, and stay with it a short time—almost as though they are re-establishing feelings of competence.
- 2) Their next activity is generally more difficult and they stay with it longer.
- 3) This is followed by “false fatigue,” a time when many children have put their work away and have not yet selected another activity.
- 4) If the teacher allows the children to take the time they need to experience the restlessness of the false fatigue, they will soon settle into their most difficult work choice of the cycle and stay with it for a longer period of time. During this time their concentration is the deepest and they make the greatest strides in the development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge. Montessori called this the “great work period.”
- 5) As the cycle nears its completion, the children put away their work and they appear to be refreshed and relaxed as they talk with one another.

When the time available is less than three hours, the great work period does not occur and the work cycle does not complete itself. To protect themselves from the frustration of having their great work period interrupted, children either do not choose any work after the false fatigue or they choose something that involves only superficial involvement.

Considering the intensity of the “great work period” and the value derived from the child's development of concentration, it is easy to understand the importance of regular attendance, adequate rest, and the opportunity for physical exercise before and after school. Your child should feel rested and physically strong when he/she arrives each morning. Careful consideration should be given to nutrition, bed times and opportunities for physical activity after school.

## Repetition

Understanding an idea and accepting a concept are just the beginning; they are the precursors to meaningful repetition for a child. Occasionally curiosity and creativity can be confused with idle manipulation of an object or an idea. A period of involvement and deep integration begins when children of their own volition choose, focus on, and repeat an activity. A sense of satisfaction and

calm may be observed. Dr. Montessori said upon observing such a child, “He shows no progress in speed or skill. It is a kind of perpetual motion. The achievement of repetition, no matter how trivial it is to the adult, gives a strength of power and independence to the child.” True inquisitiveness and curiosity are expanded here. An inner need of the child's has been satisfied. In the classroom and at home we need to protect children from interruptions during such a period.

Most adults have an external aim for which they are actively working. For children, the aim is internal. They work to grow. This is an unconscious process, indefinable in terms of the future. The work of the child, Dr. Montessori has said, is to create the adult he/she will become. When children reach the state of repeating an exercise, we know that they are on their way. The process has been set in motion. Externally, we observe self-disciplined children. They are working to perfect themselves through the use of the environment, which is a reminder that the environment should be painstakingly prepared to support the children, to sustain their need for activity, and to protect their right to develop at their own pace.

Parents with young children are very aware that a three year old cannot be hurried! For us, the activity is a means to an end. To the child, the activity is the end in itself. The whole person is involved.

We love what we know best. We repeat activities that we enjoy, that interest us. Through repetition, children create a faculty within themselves and then create something external. The 3-year-old tracing sandpaper letters would achieve little with only one introduction or one tracing experience. The tracing goes on indefinitely, with no obvious reward or result. We know that this indirect preparation is for the development of the hand. But the children do not know this, nor would they care. Eventually they will pick up a pencil and spontaneously begin to write words. The preparatory work frees them to experience a new kind of joy. This is creativity.

Recently we observed a small child, around 5 years of age, embroidering a geometric shape on a square piece of burlap. She had obviously been given several lessons prior to this experience because her stitches were careful and precise. She completed the shape with small stitches, tied the knot, and turned the fabric over to examine all sides. At this point I expected to see her place the finished product in her cubby or at least show it to a friend or an adult. Instead, she took the ripper and removed the stitches, and started the process again. This is a child with self-discipline. This is a child on her way to very positive self-formation.

## Resources

### Resource books

Parenting is a challenge, and there are many insightful books that you might find helpful. A collection is available in the office for your review. Here are some suggestions:

- *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers* — Nelsen
- *Parent Talk* – Chick Moorman
- *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* — Lillard
- *Touch Points: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development* — Brazelton
- *How to Talk so Your Child Listens, and How to Listen so Your Child Talks* — Faber
- *Montessori: A Modern Approach* — Lillard
- *The Absorbent Mind* — Montessori
- *The Secret of Childhood* — Montessori

***\*If you read only one book, this should be it!***

### Resources on line

[www.MariaMontessori.com](http://www.MariaMontessori.com)

[www.amiusa.org](http://www.amiusa.org)

[www.michaelolaf.net](http://www.michaelolaf.net)

[www.montessori-namta.org](http://www.montessori-namta.org)

[www.mmsoc.org](http://www.mmsoc.org)