



Montessori School Parent Handbook 2025-2026

Montessori School Parent Handbook

To new and returning families, we extend a warm welcome to the new school year. We are so happy you are a part of our Montessori School family. Over the course of this year our children will grow in a Montessori environment to become self-assured, vibrant students who love to learn. Parents are the most important teachers in the lives of their children and are a very important part of what makes our school community so special. We are honored to be partners with you in the development of your child. We rely on your communication, energy, support, and involvement to ensure a successful experience for your child. Medford Montessori School can benefit your child best when you understand the roles played by parents, teachers, and children.

As we begin our 47th year, we are delighted to share the many wonderful things about Medford Montessori School and to orient you to our policies, procedures, resources, and events.

Please review carefully the information included in this handbook. It is intended to acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the school. It is important that you read it thoroughly.

We do our best to remain in close communication with our families in a number of different ways.

- We use email to send our newsletters and to communicate important information. Please make sure that we have your most updated contact information.
- You may visit our website at www.medfordmontessorischool2.com for information about the school and to keep up to date on school events and news. School closure dates are also listed on our website.
- If you have suggestions, ideas or concerns, contact your child's classroom teacher and make arrangements to meet. She is your first line of communication.
- Questions and suggestions about billing should be directed to Barbara Sheaffer: barbarasheaffer49@gmail.com

We look forward to another wonderful and productive year.

Barbara & Scott Sheaffer, and Shannon Hampson

Owners/Directors

MISSION STATEMENT

At Medford Montessori School, children and families experience an individualized education that builds the foundation for a lifetime of success and a love of learning through specialized teachers, lessons and materials in accordance with the principles and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

At Medford Montessori School 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 help children develop self-confidence
- To foster in the children deep and persistent curiosity that will lead to lifelong pursuit of knowledge
- 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

OUR CORE VALUES

We believe that the practices developed by Dr. Maria Montessori fundamentally respond to the developmental characteristics and needs of children. We seek to utilize her educational principles and methodologies in all of the programs offered at Medford Montessori School.

- We believe that all children deserve to develop in an environment that is nurturing, safe and intelligent.
- We believe that parents are the principle influence in the child's life. The school provides a secondary supportive role to the home. It is a cooperative relationship between home and school, which best serves the child.
- We believe that the model of our own behavior serves as the most distinct teacher to the child.
- We believe that every member of our community has a fundamental right to be treated with respect regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual preference, religion, race or disability.
- We believe that wisdom can be nurtured and cultivated in a positive, affirming and intelligent learning environment. .
- We center the programs and curriculum of Medford Montessori School on the natural needs of human development.
- We describe the learning environment of Medford Montessori School as active as opposed to passive. The environment is dynamic, with children functioning as active agents in the learning process by making choices and learning to be responsible for those choices.
- We believe that our school has a responsibility to prepare its students for life, balancing academic excellence with the development of personal and practical life skills.
- We offer a flexible learning environment that responds to individual needs, has an adaptable curriculum, and honors diverse learning styles.
- We strive to create a true balance among freedom, order and responsibility in each classroom.
- We believe that children can learn constructive modes of problem-solving and conflict
- We believe that all forms of expression and communication should be nurtured. Art, music, literature, drama and other forms are fundamental modes of expression for the human spirit.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

History and Philosophy

Since 1978, Medford Montessori School has served as a private education institution for school aged children. Over time, Medford Montessori School has expanded from a primary school into a reputable educational institution serving students ages 3-12 years of age. Our highly trained, credentialed teachers nurture and cultivate each child's curiosity while providing a strong foundation for continued academic success. Medford Montessori School provides a warm, vibrant, educational home designed to foster a love of learning and help all children reach their fullest potential at their own unique pace. We strive to educate the whole child and to inspire children to be caring, socially responsible participants in their community and world. Multi-age classrooms allow the children to learn from one another and to be valued contributors to the classroom community.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to be an active part in their child's education. In addition to weekly newsletters, an active Facebook page, and a regularly updated website, we invite parents to join us on exploratory field trips, help us organize school events or fundraisers, and connect with each other informally, creating a network that links the classroom to the community, and in turn, to the world.

At Medford Montessori School we are invested in creating respectful relationships among teachers, administrative staff, parents, and children. We appreciate and celebrate diversity and recognize how we as a school benefit from the array of cultural backgrounds and traditions that families and staff members bring to our community. We work to provide an inclusive environment and do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, handicap, or sexual orientation.

Our approach to education is based on the philosophy and methods of Maria Montessori, the first Italian female physician who founded the first Montessori school in Rome in 1907. Dr. Montessori believed that the goal of the educational process was to cultivate a child's natural desire to learn. Dr. Montessori observed that all children have the same basic needs:

- The need for order – to organize, classify and interpret reality
- The need for independence – the impulse to act personally upon and within reality
- The need for social relationships
- The need to experience reality through imagination

Our teachers carefully prepare classroom environments and direct the activity of the classroom, but it is the child who learns. Dr. Montessori observed that children are motivated through the work itself and that children, like adults, learn best by doing rather than being filled with facts. Concentration, determination, and purpose established in early childhood lead to confident, successful learning later in life. At Medford Montessori School, children learn how to observe, think, and evaluate and experience the joy of learning. The Montessori approach is not a tweaking of traditional models of education, it is a completely different way of learning and teaching designed to prepare children for success in an increasingly complex world.

Medford Montessori School is an advocate for the child, developing education programs that follow the natural needs and development of the child. We believe each person has the potential to achieve success through an ordered, challenging, nurturing educational environment that includes the whole person – intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical. At the center is the child, whose needs are the focus of the learning process. It is the role of our school's staff members not only to observe, but also to know and defend the rights of the child as he/she proceeds through the learning process.

Campuses and Classroom Space

Medford Montessori School has two campuses. Our Poplar campus is located at 1398 Poplar Drive. The Poplar campus has one primary classroom; students ages 3-5, one kindergarten classroom; students ages 5-6, and one upper elementary classroom; students grades 4th-5th. Our two lower elementary classrooms, serving students grades 1st-3rd, are at our second campus which is located at 1801 E. Jackson Street.

Each of the classrooms is thoughtfully arranged and offers an inviting space for activity that is focused and calm. Learning materials are displayed on shelves that are accessible to the children to foster independence as the students go about their daily work. There are spaces in the classroom that allow for group activity as well as areas where the student can work alone. There are well-defined spaces for each part of the curriculum, such as Language Arts, Math, and Culture. Each of these areas features shelves or display tables with a variety of inviting materials from which students can choose.

Curriculum and Teachers

The term “Montessori” implies both philosophy and a method of education philosophy based on the research of Dr. Maria Montessori – an Italian physician and educator. At its heart, the Montessori method emphasizes independence, freedom within limits, and a respect for the child. Classroom spaces are purposefully designed and materials carefully curated in pursuit of an education partnership. Multi-aged classrooms provide benefits that are readily apparent when visiting the classroom. Younger children in the classroom have an opportunity to observe and imitate the older students as they work. Older students have an opportunity to reinforce their own knowledge by explaining what they are doing and assisting and mentoring younger children. Each child can learn and develop at his own pace within a classroom that accommodates many levels of ability and complexity.

Our teachers use both concrete teaching materials and a well-defined innovative curriculum tailored to the child, and through each three-year cycle from the Primary program through both levels of the Elementary program. Our Montessori teachers are specially trained to observe each child and to design lessons based on that child’s natural curiosity and love of learning. Each teacher is responsible for preparing the educational environment within each classroom and for presenting lessons in that environment. During the course of a day, the classroom teacher will demonstrate a wide array of concrete sensorial materials and sequential activities through individual instruction. The child soon learns to associate abstract concepts with hands-on experience.

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 Medford Montessori School 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.

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 and newsletters. Both parents and students are enriched by parents’ involvement in school activities.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

Admission Guidelines

Enrollment preference will be given to families with a firm commitment to Montessori philosophy as well as returning school families. Classes are multi-age, and the school will make every effort to balance each class with respect to age and gender. The Montessori School is open to all children regardless of race, sex, religion or creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, handicap or sexual orientation. Children entering our preschool program must be at least 3.0 years of age and fully potty trained by September 1st of the school year they are entering.

Admission Process

Tour and observation: Though not required, a tour of our campus is strongly recommended. You may visit the Poplar campus, the Jackson Street campus, or both campuses. During this tour, you will meet our teachers, will have the opportunity to observe a classroom “in action”, as well as ask questions!

Parent and Student Meeting: A meeting may be scheduled with you and your child to answer any additional questions and to see if the Montessori environment is a good fit. Elementary age children will typically visit and spend a “shadow” day in a classroom.

Enrollment: After the Parent / Teacher / Student meetings, families are able to register their student if the class they are interested in attending has openings. Signed enrollment registration forms, along with a registration deposit and materials fee are due back immediately to hold your child's spot in a classroom. If you apply for enrollment but there are no openings, your child will be placed on the wait list 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 classroom 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

Medford 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 may be asked to seek professional assistance, or to withdrawal from the program.

Enrollment Termination Process

- The classroom teacher will consult with the school director at the earliest opportunity to identify an at-risk student.
- The director may observe the student in the classroom and/or on the playground, and provide the classroom 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 the 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 any 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.
- If a family is asked to leave the school, the student will be considered withdrawn after the last date of attendance. Tuition will be prorated for time attended, and the school shall retain the deposit and fees.

Other Reasons for Withdrawal:

- Medford Montessori 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 15 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 10-month academic year, September – June. A registration fee is due upon enrollment or re-enrollment. In the event you withdraw your child at any time from school, the deposit is nonrefundable. Please refer to your enrollment registration form for additional information.

- 2025-2026 non-refundable registration fee: \$395.00

Once the program registration fee is paid, there are three options for paying the balance of the tuition for the 2025-2026 school year:

1. A single lump-sum prepayment due in September 2025: One payment of \$9069.50 (\$9,350.00 less \$280.50, 3% discount))
2. Two equal bi-annual payments due in September 2025 and February 2026: Two equal payments of \$4,581.50 (\$9,350.00 less \$187.00, 2% discount)
3. Ten equal payments of \$935.00 monthly, September 2025-June 2026

**A 5% sibling discount is offered for one or more siblings attending. Total tuition minus 5%*

2025-2026 School Tuition:

Primary (ages 3-5, 8:05am - 3:00pm) \$9,350.00 annually

Kindergarten (ages 5-6, 8:05am – 3:05pm) \$9,350.00 annually

Lower Elementary (grades 1st – 3rd, 8:00am – 3:00pm) \$9,350.00 annually

Upper Elementary (grades 4th – 6th, 7:55am – 2:55pm) \$9,350.00 annually

Willows Afterschool Extended Care:

- 1) Monthly - \$235.00 unlimited
- 2) Daily - \$18.00 drop-in

SCHOOL POLICIES

School Hours

Primary (preschool):	8:05am – 3:00pm
Kindergarten:	8:05am – 3:05pm
Lower Elementary(1 st -3 rd):	8:00am – 3:00pm
Upper Elementary(4 th -6 th):	7:55am – 2:55pm
Afterschool Care:	3:15pm - 5:30pm

Our regular school year schedule is from the day after Labor Day through mid-June. We offer a variety of weeklong summer camps beginning the end of June through mid- August at our Poplar Campus. Staff continue to check emails and phone messages left at both campuses throughout the summer. You may also send an e-mail to medfordmontessorischool2@gmail.com

Accounting Policies

Materials Fee: To assist with the expense of replacing and updating the Montessori classroom materials, an annual materials fee is charged at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment. The materials fee is included in the non-refundable registration fee due at registration.

Child Care Billing: For families who use after school childcare and are billed at our daily rate, fees for childcare are billed on the first of each month based on total days of use in the preceding month. The daily rate is \$18.00 daily.

Monthly Tuition: If you select to pay tuition in monthly installments, it is the parent's responsibility to pay the monthly tuition by the 10th of each month. Tuition signs will be posted as a reminder. A late fee of \$25.00 will be charge for each late payment. Please make checks payable to Medford Montessori School. You may use postal mail or drop your payment in our payment drop boxes.

Overdue Accounts: If a payment is late, a late fee of \$25.00 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. Enrollment in other programs, e.g., summer programs, enrichment camps, next academic year and deposits for the following year will not be accepted unless your account is current. If your account is past due, all monies paid will be posted to the outstanding balance. Accounts that remain unpaid may be referred to collections.

No School/No Childcare Days

School is CLOSED and no services are provided on the following days unless otherwise noted:

August 27th - August 29th - Staff Training

September 1st - Labor Day

October 10th – Teacher In-service

November 11th – Veteran’s Day

November 26th – 28th - Thanksgiving Break

December 22nd through January 2nd - Winter Break

January 16th- Teacher Grading Day

January 19th – MLK Day

January 29th – Parent Teacher Conferences

January 30th – Parent Teacher Conferences

February 16th – President’s Day

March 23rd – March 27th – Spring Break

April 17th – Teacher In-service

May 25th - Memorial Day

June 15th- August 25th- Summer Break

Attendance

Regular, punctual attendance is necessary for your child to receive the full benefit of the Montessori program. Parents should notify their child’s teacher 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 your child’s teacher if your child contracts a contagious disease. More information can be found under the “Health Policies” section.

Primary students: 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.

Elementary aged students: Legally, all elementary-age children must attend school daily. 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 classroom teacher the educational experiences and activities that will be learned.

Arrival and Dismissal

Primary Students attend 8:05am to 3:00pm, with a 10 minute grace period for arrival and departure

Kindergarten Students attend 8:05am to 3:05pm, with a 10 minute grace period for arrival and departure

Lower Elementary Students attend 8:00am to 3:00pm, with a 10 minute grace period for arrival and departure.

Upper Elementary Students attend 7:55am to 2:55pm, with a 10-minute grace period for arrival and departure.

If a child arrives prior to the grace period, they must wait in the car with their parent until the teacher opens to gate or door for morning greetings. If a child is picked up after the grace period, the child will be sent to the Willows after school care and charged at the daily rate.

Students picked up late from Willows after school care will be charged at a rate of \$10.00 per late pick up.

Arrival: When arriving at our school, parents of primary children should park in the parking lot and enter the building using your child's classroom entrance where a teacher will be waiting to greet you and your child.

Primary and Kindergarten age children need to be walked to their corresponding entrance by a parent / guardian and wait with them until they are received by a teacher. Lower and Upper Elementary students may be dropped off outside the school entrance and enter the building themselves or be escorted to the door / gate by an adult.

Dismissal and Release of Children: Please pick up your child at the designated time and location. If you will be late, please call the school. Children who have not been picked up within 10 minutes of dismissal time will be placed in the After School Childcare program, Willows, and parents will be billed at the daily rate. For children who are not picked up by 5:30pm, we charge a late fee of \$10.00 per incident.

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.

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.

School Closings

In the event of a snowstorm, weather emergency, or unforeseen school closure, please tune in to the local news for announcements about school closings. Medford Montessori School follows the Medford School District School Closures and Late Starts due to inclement weather. You should also check your email, as Medford Montessori School will send an all school email to all families advising of school closure. Since many of you rely on us to provide childcare so that you can attend work, our school is only closed when Medford School District closes due to inclement weather or if we are without electricity. Both campuses will be on a 2-hour delay if Medford School District delays school by 2 hours due to icy roads. We often remain open while many other schools are closed because those schools provide student transportation. We realize that many of you live some distance from school and we encourage you to use your own judgment when deciding whether to venture out in questionable weather and road conditions. Schoolwork can always be made up. You are welcome to call the school when questionable conditions exist.

Occasionally inclement weather happens during the school day. If this occurs, the school director will monitor the weather and determine if mid-day school closure is necessary for safety concerns. If this occurs, teachers will email, text and call families to notify them of school closing midday. **If it is determined we will need to close, you must make arrangements to have your child picked up within one hour of the stated closing time.**

Health Policy

Immunizations: Any school age child enrolling in an Oregon school 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. Medford Montessori School will provide information on procedures for immunization exemption.

Illness: To maintain a healthy and positive atmosphere for all children and staff, children who are ill or who are becoming ill must be kept at home. If, for example, your child has vomited, had a fever or diarrhea in the last 24 hours, keep him/her home. Children must be symptom free

WITHOUT MEDICATION for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child has been ill and seems well after beginning a series of antibiotics, she/he may return to school with the doctor's permission. Children who become ill while at school will be kept apart from the other children, and their parents will be called to pick them up as soon as possible. **For the protection of all students and staff, the school staff reserves the right to send a child home whose health (according to Department of 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:**

Children should not be brought to school if they have:

- Vomited within the last 24 hours
- Pink Eye (conjunctivitis) *may return 24hrs. after starting prescribed antibiotics
- A fever of 100.4 or higher within the last 24 hours
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Severe cough
- Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled
- Difficulty breathing
- Runny nose
- Shortness of breath
- Headache
- Rash
- Require more rest time than that provided by the program
- Complaints of severe pain
- Tested positive for Covid-19 and have symptoms
- Head Lice (see more below)

If your child is diagnosed with any communicable disease (*covid-19, chicken pox, whooping cough, fifth disease, pink eye, etc.) or head lice, it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school, so that an exposure notice can be sent home to all families and posted at school.

Head Lice: MMS has a no lice / no nits policy. If lice or nits are discovered at school, children may have their head inspected by the school. If head lice OR nits are found on your child's head, you will be notified and your child will be sent home until properly treated. MMS reserves the right to perform random head checks throughout the year by qualified nurses or designated staff. ***Your child may return to school if:*** A note is provided from qualified medical personal stating that your child is lice / nit free. In the absence of such documentation, MMS reserves the right to inspect your child's head prior to him/her returning to school.

Hand washing: Children and staff wash their hands upon arriving at school daily. Children and staff wash their hands before eating, after using the bathroom and after blowing their noses and touching their face.

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 classroom equipment, shared materials & sleeping mats: Classroom equipment is regularly cleaned and sanitized to minimize the spread of disease. Primary rest mats are sanitized daily and bedding is sent home on Fridays to be washed by guardians and returned on Mondays.

Controlling infection: 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. We post signs, including symptoms, at classroom doors and institute special daily disinfection procedures. If necessary or in severe cases, the school will contact the Health Department to discuss recommended action for this particular illness.

Medication administration: Any medicine that is brought to school must be given to your student's 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 staff 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.

Child Safety

Parent Notifications: Parents or their authorized emergency contacts will be notified immediately of any accidents, injuries, or illnesses. Behavioral incidents will be communicated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the seriousness of the incident (determined by classroom teacher). You will be contacted either immediately by phone for urgent matters, 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. Employees are trained in identifying abuse and neglect.

Employee Screening: All employees are subject to background checks by the State of Oregon and must be registered through Central Background Registry for the State of Oregon. Potential employees are required to interview, and provide references. All volunteers are screened for abuse and child neglect.

Building Security and Emergency Preparation: Fire Safety inspection is done on a yearly basis. Medford Montessori School conducts fire drills regularly throughout the year as well as an annual earthquake drill. We follow safety and emergency plans that are reviewed on an annual or as needed basis. During the day, the main entrance at the Poplar campus is locked (door can be opened from the inside). There is a doorbell at main entrance. Signs are posted on both entrance gates indicating entrance is for Medford Montessori School families only. Security cameras are posted at all entrances, including back porch. During the school day everyone is asked to ring the doorbell or call the school to be admitted on campus.

Visitors: We welcome and encourage visits to the school from parents, outside teachers, prospective families, and the larger community. When you visit the school, please sign in. Please note: All visitors will be accompanied by a Medford Montessori Staff member at all times.

Weapons: Medford Montessori School is a private property. No weapons of any sort are allowed on our campuses. Any individual who is found to have brought a weapon on campus (regardless of a license to carry), will be prohibited from being on Medford Montessori School property in the future.

Lockdown Procedure:

- An all school lockdown should take place anytime a faculty member feels there is a serious threat to themselves, students, or other school faculty.
- A lockdown should take place at Poplar Campus anytime Wilson Elementary is on lockdown. Jackson Street Campus will lockdown anytime there is a lockdown at Hedrick Middle School or Roosevelt Elementary.
- A lockdown should take place anytime either school campus is notified by safety personnel that there is a neighborhood threat.

Communication

Nearly all 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 weekly newsletters sent by your child's teacher as it contains important information about your child's classroom as well as school-wide information.

School Calendar: An all school calendar is sent out to families at the beginning of the school year. Any updates to the calendar are sent out in the weekly emails.

Email: In our ongoing efforts to be more conscientious in the use of resources, nearly all communication between the school and home will be made electronically. All regular correspondence from the school will be sent via e-mail. If you are not receiving our weekly newsletters or other email communication from us please inform the office or email your correct email address to medfordmontessorischool2@gmail.com

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

Clothing and Footwear

Clothing and Extra Items: Dress should allow children freedom to engage in a wide range of activities. Please help your child select clothing and shoes that allow freedom of movement. All children have outdoor playtime and/or physical education every day and should dress accordingly. Younger children should wear clothing that enables them to dress themselves easily. Students in Primary classes 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. Lower and Upper Elementary classes should wear tennis shoes for physical education class.

Outside Wear: All students go outside most days, even if it's lightly sprinkling. 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 laces that must be tied or velcroed. Clogs, party shoes, flip-flops, 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, a warm jacket, mittens, and hat are recommended.

Indoor Shoes: All children wear slippers or socks at all times while in the classroom for several reasons. The Montessori method recognizes the child's need for quiet and order in the classroom to allow them the greatest opportunity for concentrated work. The children use mats for a great deal of floor work, and indoor slippers / socks 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 slippers or clean socks to be kept at school. Please mark the child's name on both shoes.

****To avoid confusion and prevent loss of clothing, *please label all garments with your child's first and last 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.

Lunches & Snacks: At Medford Montessori School, parents are responsible for their child's lunches and daily morning snack. Please be sure to send nutritious lunches and snacks your child will eat and enjoy, **and which also include the important basic food groups**. Please do not send candy, or sugary foods. Water is the only option for drinks. Ice packs should be used in children's lunches. We cannot reheat food. You may use thermos bottles if you wish.

Naps and Quiet Time

Preschool 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 Medford Montessori School all children in the primary program are encouraged 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.

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. Your child should be well enough to participate fully at school if he/she is in attendance, therefore will not be allowed to stay inside due to a cold or lingering ear infection, etc. On extremely cold days, an optional outdoor time will be provided and students opting out of going outside will be able to have a quiet work time inside with a supervising teacher.

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, during a designated share time. 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 Medford Montessori School, 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. Your deposit will be held on account until your child is fully potty- trained and an opening exists.

Child Custody Issues

Medford 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 guardians. The school will be supportive, open, and welcoming to both guardians. We will remain neutral in conflicts between guardians.

School records, conferences, meeting information, educational materials and similar items are available to both guardians. Guardians should try to schedule joint conferences with the teacher, but accommodations can be made for separate conferences. Guardians, 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 registration form.

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

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 does not contact or contract for outside services. It is the decision and responsibility of the parents to make those arrangements.

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)

Parents have the right to access their children's educational records. Medford Montessori School has the obligation to inform parents annually of their right to this access.

Parents have a right to:

- Inspect and review the student's educational records.
- Seek amendment to the student's educational records that the parent believes to be inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights.
- Consent to the disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in a student's educational records.
- File a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

Parent Notification of the Licensing Notebook Requirement

Medford Montessori School maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans. The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Back to School Orientation

The first day of the new school year is a designated Back to School day. Students are invited to visit their classroom with a guardian and meet / reconnect with their teacher for a designated amount of time. Orientation is a crucial component in your child's successful introduction to the class. Please plan vacations, appointments, etc., around these important days.

Parent Observation

All guardians are welcome to observe our classrooms. Seeing the children at work is to experience the Montessori philosophy in action. To make your observation more meaningful: take a look around the room and notice the amount and diversity of activity; the range of ages; the types of materials; the individual and group activity; and the interaction of the children. Focus your attention on the teacher and notice the composure, the teacher as observer, and the respect the teacher shows each child. Focus your attention on your child and notice the succession of activities; the concentration on work; enthusiasm and self-satisfaction in each activity; and the child's respect for other children, the materials, and the adults.

If you would like to observe a class, we ask that you make arrangements with the classroom teacher in advance to minimize disruption to the classroom and to make sure that the students will be in the room when you visit.

During a formal in-class observation, we request that you adhere to the following guidelines: sit quietly in the observation chairs indicated; try not to make your presence felt; do not initiate conversation; and do not handle the materials. We recommend these guidelines to minimize interference in the children's peaceful environment. Feel free to make notes of items you would like to discuss during your conference with the classroom teacher.

Student Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in the late January / early February. Guardians are given the opportunity to select a convenient time for the conference. Classroom teachers are also 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. Classroom teachers will periodically make personal phone calls throughout the school year.

Classroom Open House

Children love to share their experiences, so this evening is set-aside for the children to show guardians and other family members around their classroom. It is always a very special evening for your scholar. Check the school calendar for the dates/times of your child's classroom family open houses.

Fundraising Events

Our annual Jog-A-Thon is Medford Montessori School's largest fundraising event. Students have an opportunity to help raise money for the school by jogging laps around the track connected to our Poplar Campus. Music, snacks, friends, and smiles make this event a fun filled day!

Field Trips and Going Out Excursions

We try to give ample notice for field trips. Notification of a field trip is given to the guardians at least two weeks 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 Medford Montessori School. Off-campus trips create potential hazards that require us to take special precautions. MMS 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. Classroom

teachers and supervisory staff can exclude a child from an outing if this parental supervision is not available.

Parent volunteers are utilized for student transportation for field trips. All children under 4' 9" must be secured in a child safety seat or child booster seat. All parent volunteers who accompany children on field trips must be screened for child abuse and safe driving records.

For elementary students, field trips offer enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom setting. Some field trips include all elementary students; others include only one class or age group. These field trips allow children to see, hear, and experience what we cannot offer within the classroom walls. The trips usually relate to the topics being studied, but also may be scheduled to observe steps in a process or places and events that foster community awareness.

Birthdays

The Birthday Walk Around the Sun. In the Primary and Kindergarten classrooms, 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 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. In the Elementary birthday celebrations are handled differently. Your child's teacher can explain how birthdays are celebrated in her class. Children with summer birthdays select a date during the school year to celebrate their birthday.

Birthday Parties / Invitations: If you are planning a birthday party for your child, please do not send invitations to school **unless all the children in the class are invited**. If your child is attending a party after school, please do not send gifts to school with your child. We have found that these situations can be upsetting for those who are not invited.

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 the primary and kindergarten programs are designed to take advantage of this powerful, formative period. The primary program is our fundamental, core Montessori program that runs all day, five days a week (Monday through Friday). The primary 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 primary classrooms, 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 primary (preschool / kindergarten), lower elementary, and upper elementary programs are a three-year cycle. Children begin at three years of age in the primary (preschool), six years of age in lower elementary and nine years of age in upper elementary programs. We have found children adjust and access the Montessori environment much more successfully when they attend five days a week. 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.

Curriculum

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. As children enter into the older classrooms, participation in book clubs, literature groups, essay and story writing occur.

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, fractions, decimals, and geometry.

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. Montessori maps 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. Medford Montessori students 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 experience art, music, and physical movement as part of the Montessori program. Regular singing, movement, and use of musical instruments is offered to all children in both large and small groups.

Summer Program

Medford Montessori provides several weeklong camps each summer that have proven to be exceptional. Classroom teachers design camps with the most curious child in mind. Camp themes range from spy camp to cooking camp. Campers need to be between 3-10 years of age. While students outside of our Montessori family may register for camp, priority is given to current school families. Enrollment information is distributed in March/April each year. You are encouraged to reserve a place for your child early in the spring because space is limited.

Typical Daily School Schedule

8:00 am – 8:30 am: Arrival. Children engaged in wide variety of activities that include individual play, language work time, small group activities, care and feeding of plants and animals.

9:00 am- 11:45am: Independent work choice 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, snack, and outside play. Older students meet for daily math lessons.

12:00pm: Lunch / Clean up / Outdoor Play

1:00 pm: Younger children nap, or engage in quiet Montessori activities in the childcare room. Older students engage in the afternoon work period. Curriculum may include science, geography, cultural studies, art, etc.

2:45 pm: Prepare for home

2:55-3:10pm: Outdoor play and dismissal

3:15 pm: Children in after school childcare program return indoors or continue to play outside (weather permitting)

3:15pm – 5:30pm: Snack, story time, creative dramatics and individual work choice

5:30pm: Closing Time

Positive Approaches to Discipline

Medford Montessori School 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
- Gentle reminders of appropriate behavior and expectations
- 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 meet with the classroom teacher and school director. A behavior plan may be necessary to address behavior needs. 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.)

If a student's behavior becomes unsafe to themselves or other students, one teacher will move the entire class to a safe space (other classroom or playground), while one teacher stays with the student exhibiting the unsafe behavior until a parent can pick the student up from school. The student exhibiting the unsafe behavior will be suspended until a meeting can take place to address the behavior needs and a behavior plan can be developed to be successfully implemented.

ELEMENTARY PROGRAM

The elementary program is a natural continuation of the philosophy, materials and methods found in the Primary room. Like the classrooms for younger children, Elementary classrooms are multi-aged; they include Lower Elementary (children aged 6 to 9 years old) and Upper Elementary (children aged 9-12 years old.)

Curriculum

In the Elementary program, students begin to move away from concrete materials and develop an ability to think abstractly as developmentally dictated. Learning tools in the Elementary classroom take on multiple and more sophisticated uses. The integrated curriculum includes: reading, language arts, geography, music, art, mathematics, spelling, history, botany, zoology, physical science, physical education, social studies, field trips and other outdoor experiences.

The Elementary program is guided by individualized yet collaborative learning. Each child is a unique person with particular aptitudes and interests. The role of the Montessori teacher is to provoke questions and teach the children the skills to answer those questions. The teacher serves as a guide to each child in his or her own learning, exploring a diverse curriculum, and creating rich learning experiences as the child moves from concrete to abstract thinking. Our teachers match their instruction with each child's learning style and natural talents, ensuring every child is engaged and invested in learning, and capable of achieving success.

The children in our Elementary classrooms learn to research information, write reports, and make presentations to the group. They participate in community service activities as well as perform in a class play, build models, participate in a cultural fair, and engage in a variety of student-center projects. The range of topics is limitless and the curriculum is vast. Montessori has a proud history of offering excellent hands-on, concrete materials to teach abstract concepts in both science and math. The children explore art, music, biology, chemistry, poetry, theater, engineering, and more.

Together, children and teachers create an inclusive environment that supports social and emotional development. Children help one another and come to feel that helping is part of living. The feeling in the room is more like that of an extended family, and the focus on respectful social interaction and problem solving cultivates a social maturity atypical of children of this age.

The strength of these relationships allows the children to take risks, voice opinions, and creatively express themselves.

Keeping Track of Work

Children in an elementary classroom begin to keep a record of their work. This can take the form of a work plan, or contract. Children develop work plans where they agree to do certain work during a day week or month. The child still has the freedom to choose their own work, as well as choosing to work with another child or in a group. Keeping track of their work helps them make good work choices, and lets the teacher see which presentations have been done and which are still needed.

Testing

Standardized testing means different things to different people and some educators find data from standardized tests useful in guiding instruction for individual students. Others recognize that education has been adapted to “teach to the test” there for limiting meaningful learning. Montessori educators approach assessment differently. Assessment occurs through the process of keen observation, regular work and conferencing with the student, and through self-correction that is built into the Montessori materials. The teacher is able to observe readiness for new concepts. At Medford Montessori School, we acknowledge that checking for understanding is necessary in the learning process, and the ability to effectively negotiate an assessment is an important skill as well. At MMS, we use a variety of informal and formal assessments to gain a better understanding of knowledge and to create a path that is personalized for each student.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Medford Montessori School offers after school care for the children of working parents. Child-care is available after class until we close at 5:30 pm. (See policies below)

Pickup after dismissal: If your child is not picked up within 15 minutes of dismissal, he/she will join the after school child care group and you will be charged the regular daily child care rate for Willows.

Late fees: A late pick-up fee of \$10.00 is added for each incident.

Availability

Our after school childcare program is available on all school days to registered students of MMS only. It is important to sign up for our after school program with our afterschool program director. Preschool students are admitted to the afterschool childcare program per approval of their teacher. During legal holidays, teacher in-service days, conference, and vacation days, a childcare camp may be available to registered students of MMS only. Check for postings and updates as the time nears.

Childcare Program

Children in our after school childcare program will be involved in a variety of activities, including individual play, outdoor play, work jobs, group games, and art projects. Our afterschool program teacher, who is an experienced classroom teacher, supervises these activities.

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!" Or, "I can tell that you put a lot of effort into this project by the details on your model." 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.

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 cleanup 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.

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 Work Cycle

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. Dr. 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.

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.

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

