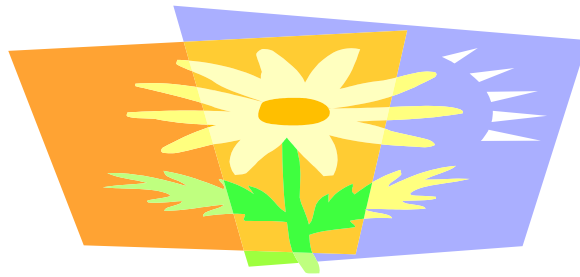


Dear Parents,

Welcome to Hope Montessori! We hope that this handbook will be helpful and serve as a guide through the academic year as you become better acquainted with our program.

Hope Montessori's Parent Handbook



“If houses suitable for children do not exist then let us build them.”

- Maria Montessori

Last Revised: April 19, 2011

Welcome! P. 1

Hope Montessori Parent Handbook

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I. Our Mission and Identity

Mission Statement

Hope Montessori Inc. was founded to nurture the spirit of children and the joy of learning in an atmosphere of freedom, respect, and responsibility.

We aim to assist the child in his or her own development by preparing an environment rich in didactic materials that will invite hands-on discoveries.

We seek to help each child to build an awareness of self, of others, and the world.

It is our hope, that in giving the best we can give of ourselves, we will be creating a better world.

Goals of the Children's House

We believe that parents and the environment they create at home are the chief educational influences in the life of the child. As a school we want support you in your work as a parent and help you in discovering who your child is, and what his needs are, as he enters on the adventure of life. It is our goal to help your child become a creative, competent human being, who is fully aware of him or herself, of others, and of the world around him. Other goals include love of learning, self-motivation, increased self-esteem, persistence and concentration, habits of inner discipline and order.

To realize these goals we have created a Children's House, a place where children can be themselves in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility. It is a place where little ones will come joyfully and become absorbed and interested in their learning.

Parents are brought into this atmosphere as much as possible through a host of interesting activities. Often friendships made in this "family" will last a lifetime. May this handbook be your invitation to join us in this educational adventure.

History of Hope Montessori, Inc.

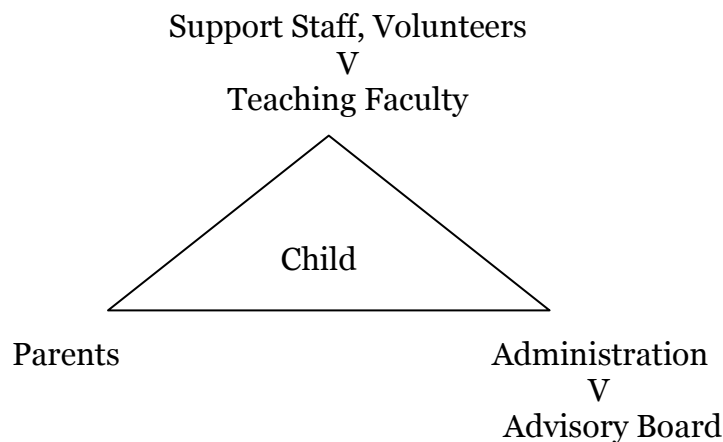
Hope Montessori was founded in April of 2000. * Its first site is located in a ranch-style home which was originally built in 1948. The property required some loving care – it had been sadly neglected. Some major renovations gave the old building a new life. The property adjacent to the South of the school was acquired in 2006. An expansion in 2008 enabled the addition of a second Preprimary (ages 3-6) classroom, a permanent space for Parent/Child (ages birth to 3) and Two Year Old Programs, - and we are now able to accommodate All Day Programs.

Credentials

Our teachers are experienced and dedicated Montessori Certified Educators.

Hope Montessori is recognized and distinguished as a Full-Member School by the American Montessori Society. Our 3-6 Preprimary-K Program is registered with the Illinois State Board of Education; our Two Year Old Program is licensed with the Department of Child and Family Services.

Hope Montessori Organizational Chart



*Hope Montessori was incorporated in 2000, and is structured as a For Profit School.

The Montessori Approach

The Montessori Method of education is based on the observations and discoveries of Dr. Maria Montessori. She was the first woman physician in Italy, graduating from the Royal University of Rome in 1896. From her many hours of observation she began to design activities which would help the individual development of each child. Given a carefully prepared learning environment children would work toward perfecting their concentration and inner control. Montessori is an individualized program designed to help each child reach his or her fullest potential.

The Montessori materials are designed to help the cognitive development, as well as concentration, coordination, independence and socialization. The classroom environment allows the child to develop his or her social sense and awareness of others in a natural and unrushed way. The Montessori Method is education for life.

Curriculum

Montessori aims to aid the child to help himself by developing an awareness of Reality – as he experiences it in himself, in others, in the world around him. The child works in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility. Different areas of interest are prepared to introduce to him the whole of Reality:

Practical Life
Language
Natural Sciences

Sensorial
Mathematics
Social Sciences

Art and music are given special attention as experiences in beauty. Outdoor and indoor activities facilitate physical development and introduce the child to the community in which he lives.

II. General Information

Description of Programs

We offer a Morning and Afternoon Program that serve children ages 2-6, with options for extended hours: *Early Bird Arrivals*, *Extended Day* Program, and All Day Program. We also offer programs during the Winter, Spring, and Summer Breaks as indicated by our Academic Year Calendar.

Early Bird Arrivals allows flexibility for families that require an earlier drop off time (7, 730, or 8am).

The Morning Program (830-1130 am)/Afternoon Program (130-430pm): Children may attend 3, 4, or 5 days. These days are assigned at enrollment. Please note that there can be no exchanging of days or make up days due to absence, vacations, or holidays. We maintain a maximum enrollment of 24 students per classroom per day with an adult to child ratio of 1:12, or better. We recommend 5 day enrollment for all students, for the value and consistency of the program, -but parents of 2, 3 and 4 year olds may choose 3 or 4 day schedules, as their needs dictate. 5 year olds (Kindergarten students) must attend 5 days. Once the academic year begins, parents may wish to expand their child's schedule; the school will accommodate this, if possible.

Spanish as a Second Language, Sign Language, Suzuki Violin, Yoga, Dance, Art Instruction, and Perceptual Motor Development are touched over the course of the school year *within* our program, in an introductory way. For example, we incorporate American Sign Language and Spanish into many group 'line-time' activities, and we have flashcards and posters where children who are interested may learn their colors, animals, letters... Together, we do movement activities and some beginner's yoga. We have special guests come in to demonstrate violin... We dance, we sing, we draw, paint, etc.

The Extended Day Program (1130-130pm): Our Extended Day program is simply that: additional time for the children to grow and learn within our Montessori environment, -an extension of our day. Children enrolled in our Extended Day Program bring a lunch each day to school. They share a relaxed group lunch time and then spend more time working in the classroom.

All Day Care: All day hours are offered to accommodate our working parent's schedules and needs, -caring for our children within the Montessori setting. An 830-430 basic commitment is required; Early Bird and Late Afternoon hours until 6pm are available.

Winter, Spring, and Summer Programs: There are coverage options available for our families during the Academic Year Winter and Spring Breaks and for 9 weeks during the Summer, split into 3 3-week Sessions.

Hope Montessori Parent Handbook

*** Daily Schedule for Hope Montessori Programs:**

7, 730, and 8 am early bird arrivals and activities (breakfast available for arrivals before 730)

830-845 Arrivals

845-900 Attendance/Circle
900-1030 Individual/Small Group Work Time
1030-1045 Movement on the Line
1045-1100 Prepare for Outdoors
1100-1130 Outdoors

1115-1130 A.M Dismissals

1130- 1145 Prepare for Lunch/Toileting
1145-1215 Lunch/Cleanup
1215-100 Classroom Work
100-115 Ext Day Children Prepare to Go Home

115-130 Extended Day Dismissals

115-330 All Day Children ages 4 1/2 and younger naptime; older children siesta/quiet work time

1:30-145 PM Program Arrivals

330-345 Nappers wake up, join group, Line Time (games)
345 Group snack
400 Prepare for Dismissals

415-430 PM program/ 8 Hour All Day Dismissals

430-6 All Day- Classroom Work/ Parents pick up

* We flex this schedule as needed: for example, should the weather be prohibitive, or if the children are very concentrated, we may choose to skip or shorten outdoor time... When the days are warmer, less time is needed to prepare for outside. In the summer, we tend to flip the schedule so that our outdoor time is first thing in the morning (thereby avoiding the height of the sun's UV rays and heat). Morning group hours during the Summer are extended slightly – dismissals are from 11:45 – 12 noon.

Please Note: PM Class follows schedule similar to AM group but with arrivals at 130-145 and dismissals at 415 – 430 pm.

Registration

Returning Families (currently enrolled) have first opportunity to register for upcoming Summer and School Year Programs.

New Families...

We rely on word-of-mouth referrals! We fully appreciate the compliment you pay us by sending someone our way! If you are happy with our program, share the news! If you know someone interested in enrolling their child, let them know that they can call our office or contact us through our website (hope-montessori.com) to schedule an appointment to view the school. The school's registrar is ready to answer parent inquiries and welcome the many visitors who are interested in our programs and come to observe a class in action.

After applications are received and acceptance confirmed, we send out a packet of information: the class calendar, parent handbook, as well as the forms (medical, dental, profile, permission, etc.) the state requires for your child's file (to be completed and turned in before the start of school). We schedule Introduction, Interview and Orientation Schedules in the weeks preceding the projected start date.

Hope Montessori, Inc

Hope Montessori Parent Handbook

**17007 S. Oak Park Avenue
Tinley Park, IL 60477
(708) 614-7577
3-6 Preprimary-K Contract**

The Montessori Method requires the teacher to give extensive time to the preparation of the learning environments before, during, and after the classroom schedule. It is the many hours of preparation that enables us to present a quality program. Our Academic Year follows the Public School Year Calendar.

I understand that students are admitted for the full Academic Year. My agreement to pay for the full Academic Year is not subject to adjustments for illnesses, absence, withdrawal, or dismissal.

Preprimary – K (3-6) class requirements: I understand that all children must be out of diapers at the start of the school year. A child who has not achieved this ability may be permitted a delayed start; however, tuition must be paid in order to maintain the child's position in the class. A minimum enrollment of 8 children/day is required to maintain a program.*

I understand that I have the privilege of canceling this contract, provided that I give written notice to the school **60 days** prior to the withdrawal date. The last day to withdraw before the start of the school year is June 15th, 2011. The registration fee is non-refundable.

Because Administration does recognize the fact that extraordinary circumstances can exist, the Administrator, *after consultation with the Advisory Board*, may waive any of the provisions of the above paragraphs.

In consideration for acceptance of my child as a student at Hope Montessori, Inc. the undersigned agrees to indemnify Hope Montessori, Inc., its Directors and employees against any claims or demands made by or on the behalf of:

Name of Child: _____

Name: **Morning Program:** (830-1130am- 3, 4, or 5 day)
Annual Tuition: \$4,500.00 for 5-day, \$4,200.00 for 4- day, \$3,800.00 for 3-day
Your Choice of Program *5 day_____, 4 day_____, 3day_____ (*Kindergarten year: 5 day am is required).
If certain days are required, please specify: _____

Program Name: **Afternoon Program:** (1:30 pm – 4:30 pm – 3, 4, or 5 day)
Annual Tuition: \$4,500.00 for 5-day, \$4,200.00 for 4- day, \$3,800.00 for 3-day
Your Choice of Program *5 day_____, 4 day_____, 3day_____ (*Kindergarten year: 5 day am is required).
If certain days are required, please specify: _____

Program Name: **Extended Day Program** (morning or afternoon program *plus* 1130-130pm)
Additional Tuition: \$2,250.00 for 5-day, \$1,800.00 for 4-day, \$1,350.00 for 3-day

Total # of days_____ If certain days are required, please specify: _____

Program Name: **Early Birds** 7 -8am arrivals
Additional Tuition: 8 am arrivals: \$565.00 for 5-day, \$452.00 for 4-day, \$339.00 for 3-day
730am arrivals: \$1,125.00 for 5-day, \$900.00 for 4-day, \$675.00 for 3-day
700 am arrivals: \$1,690.00 for 5-day, \$1,352.00 for 4-day, \$1,014.00 for 3-day
Total # of days_____ arrival time _____ If certain days are required, please specify: _____

Program Name: **All Day Program****
8:30 – 4:30 p.m. (8 hour days) **\$8,996.00 for 5-day** Other needs? Please specify for a quote: __ _____

Annual Registration Fee: \$200.00 per family

The annual tuition is divided into 10 equal payments, *the first due with the application payment*, and then 9 further payments which are due on the first of each month, starting September 1st, and ending on May 1st.

Sibling Discount= 20% for 2nd -8th child enrolled concurrently in same or lesser program.

K Yr Students (5 years old before Sept 1, 2011) Discount =5%

Amount of annual tuition (AM+ EXT DAY+E.B or All Day): _____

Amount of monthly installment =TUTION, DIVIDED BY 10: \$ _____

Amount Due with Application (Registration fee + 1/10 annual tuition): \$ _____

Please make Check or Money Order payable to Hope Montessori, Inc.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

2011-2012

Fees and Discounts

Tuition

Tuition is based on a full school year and payment schedules are based on the total tuition. We break tuition into ten payments, to make it easier for you. A deposit of 1/10th total tuition and a registration fee is due at the time of registration. The deposit will be applied to the yearly tuition. Nine more payments are due, the first of each month, September through May. The registration fee is not refundable, and there is no reduction in fees due to illness or absence.

If withdrawal is necessary, a sixty-day written notice is required. Prompt payment of tuition installments enables us to maintain a high quality program and a beautiful environment for the children. Please let us know if you need special arrangements.

Drop In*/Late Rates**

To be billed by school office on a monthly basis, -according to sign in/ out records. “Drop in” refers to non –contracted hours, and requires some advance notice; availability is limited!

Drop in*: \$10/hr (\$30 for am, \$50 for Extended Day...)

Late Pick-up Fee \$2.00 for each increment of 5 minutes late**

*These rates are intended for students already enrolled at Hope.

Please check and make sure there is room ahead of time; we wish to assure proper teacher/child ratios.

** These fees are meant to motivate “repeat offenders” to be more timely. We understand that traffic jams, unforeseen emergencies happen... so of course, the office staff will use judgment. If there is some special circumstance that will prevent you from picking up your child on time, on a frequent basis, -please let us know so we can do what we can to help.

Change of Schedule: \$25 service fee

Special Discounts

Parent/Child Class (serving parents and children birth-3)

Refer a Friend: your friend’s first visit is free!

50% off Parent/Child tuition for siblings of children concurrently enrolled in our other programs.

Sibling discount 20% discount for 2nd -8th child enrolled concurrently in same or lesser program.

K Yr Students (5 yrs. Old before Sept 1st of qualifying academic year)

Discount= 5%

III. Classroom Basics

New Parent/Transitioning Parent Orientation Meeting

Twice during the Academic Year, we offer informational meetings for our New and Transitioning parents. These meetings are a great way to begin to get acquainted with the basics of the programs and to meet your child's teacher. Returning parents are welcome, also –to refresh their knowledge, share their wisdom, and lend their support!

Initial Introduction/ Interview Meeting

Prior to the first day, you and your child will meet the class teacher and get acquainted with the environment. Your child's first days will be easier if the environment and teacher are familiar. It is helpful to set up a time with your child's teacher in the week before the scheduled start date.

Children's Orientation

We have a shortened schedule for the transition period in which the child is introduced into the classroom, usually the first two days of attendance. *A parent is required to stay.*

Separation

During your child's orientation, we ask that one parent remain in the environment with us. As the process of separation begins, we encourage independent work by the children, with you being the observer. You will be required to remain seated in a chair which we will direct you to. The purpose of your presence will be to help your child feel secure. Should we need your help, we will ask you for it. Feel free to bring a book, work, or other *quiet* activity for yourself. No cell phones, please! Slowly, the natural manifestations of independence, self-esteem, and harmony with others will occur.

A positive attitude towards separation is the most important element for both you and your child. Remember that children are sensitive to your feelings, and will look to you for guidance. If you are crying in the parking lot, chances are, your child will be, too! Often, the Orientation process helps the parents feel more at ease, - and in doing so, positively impacts the children. Separation goes both ways. In some cases, this is the first time you will be apart from one another... We want you to be confident about your choice.

A few more notes: To help children feel safe and secure, we recommend that parents always say, "Goodbye... see you soon!" before leaving (*never* sneak out).

Short, upbeat goodbyes are much easier than long heart-wrenching ones. Routines help a lot.

In the months before your child starts, it is good to adjust your morning routine to allow for plenty of sleep, getting dressed, having breakfast, etc., - so that it is not a shock when school begins. Talk to your child about what is coming, - and share how excited you are about this wonderful step they're about to make along the road of growing up.

Hope Montessori Parent Handbook

“Rush” Arrivals/Dismissals*

8:30-8:45am, 11:15-11:30 (am dismissals), 11:30-11:45 (pm arrivals), 1:15-1:30, pm class 1:30-1:45, 4:15-4:30pm*

Please be prompt, careful, and considerate! Going *northbound only* along Oak Park Frontage Road will help to eliminate congestion on the street. Drive *SLOWLY* into and out of the driveway, - the speed limit is 20 mph on the Frontage Road. Pull your car as far forward along the curb as possible, and we will be available to assist your child out of the car and walk your child to the door. Short and simple good-byes are best. For example; “Have fun, I’ll be back soon!” When leaving, continue to drive northbound on Oak Park Frontage Road to where it opens at Ravinia. Procedure is similar at dismissal time, with cars lining up curbside. One difference: we may request your assistance with securing car seats and seat belts. Please encourage your child(ren) to climb into the car seat, with minimal dilly-dallying! In the winter, adjust the belts to allow for winter coats. Our teachers are out there in all kinds of weather-rain, sleet, and snow! Better to roll the window down a little than to have the children peel off layers *as the teacher waits* to secure them into their seats. Multiple children? Children in the far rear? We may ask you to pull into a parking spot so you are not rushed, and so other families don’t have to wait too long.

“Off- Rush” Arrivals/ Dismissals- Early Bird, etc.

If for any reason you are running late, coming to visit the class, or have an arrival /dismissal time outside of the rush times*, please park your car and walk with your child into or from the school. **Please hold your child’s hand when walking through the parking area! Parents who enter the building are required to sign their child in or out -on our clipboard.**

Arrivals and Dismissal Times

Early Bird Arrivals 7, 7:30, or 8am (please walk-in)

Morning Program- Arrivals: 8:30-8:45 Dismissals: 11:15-11:30

Extended Day- Dismissals: 1:15-1:30

PM Program - Arrivals: 1:30-1:45 Dismissals: 4:15-4:30

All Day- 8:30-4:30 Dismissals for All Day/8 hr 4:15-4:30

Additional hours may be available...let us know your needs for a quote.

Tardiness-

On the rare occasion, it happens to the best of us! More than rarely? Please look to your household routines. Sometimes an earlier bedtime is needed; sometimes a “No TV in the Morning!” rule makes the necessary difference... Promptness is important! Tardiness implies carelessness; frequent tardiness may be perceived as disrespect. Our classrooms are disrupted by latecomers. The late children miss out on lessons. They may feel out-of-sinc. Put yourself in your child’s shoes. What would it feel like to you? Tardiness reflects poorly on all involved. We need to make a commitment to arrive on time. This communicates a message to your child and to the school that you value the program. Let us know if we can be of any help.

Chronic offenders (after 9:30 am, more than 5 times in a semester) may be requested to withdraw from our school.

Car Pool/Releasing Children

We will not release a child to anyone not listed on your enrollment application without written or verbal permission from you. Handwritten notes are considerate, eliminate confusion, - and are required. These can be done for the day of an exception, or put on file for all year. It is highly recommended that you give us a note, or fill out the section on your child's enrollment application, granting release of your child to a few trusted friends or family members, in case of an emergency. We *do* ask for driver's licenses! Your patience at car pool is really appreciated. We do our best to keep it running smoothly.

Class Lists

The school will provide a class list to those parents who choose to be included. Permission forms will be given out at the beginning of the year. From these lists parents can organize car pools (if they wish to share driving responsibilities to and from school), play dates, or birthday parties.

Dress

Simple, washable, and comfortable clothes are the most practical dress for the Children's House. Clothing that fosters independence helps the child become self-sufficient. Clothing with large buttons and buttonholes and easy zippers helps pave the road to success. ***All clothing should be labeled with the child's initials.***

Footwear We require children to keep a pair of black, white, or pink ***ballet slippers*** within the classroom, which they can change into daily. Ballet slippers are an excellent choice for both boys and girls.

A few reasons we like ballet slippers: Ballet slippers allow the children to flex their feet, help to protect and keep the children's feet dry, -and they help save our floors. Children can come to school prepared for the outdoors (wearing rain boot, snow boots) and do not have to carry along a pair of shoes each day to change into... and besides this: the slippers store easily (one tucks inside the other) using minimal space.

Outerwear/Outdoors

Send your child to school in clothing that is appropriate for outdoor play. We may not go out, - but it is best to be prepared should we choose to go out! Boots are recommended in fall, winter, and spring! When shopping, look for boots and that your child can easily put on and remove themselves.

Hope Montessori Parent Handbook

Be certain to mark all boots, shoes, mittens, hats, coats, snow pants, etc. with your child's initials.

Please trust our judgment! We will stay indoors when weather is *extreme* (i.e.: below 0 Fahrenheit, an Ozone Warning Day, or there is lightning).

The Preprimary classrooms alternate days using the backyard environment. Classes also take short walks on occasion through the neighborhood and to one of our nearby parks.

If your child has a special health condition that requires him to remain indoors, please send a Dr's note! Otherwise, we generally consider it healthy to go outside. When we do go out, we like to go outside as a group. Children who are to remain inside will sit in the office area, until their class returns.

Extra Clothing

Because the children work with water, or on occasion, have little mishaps, we need one complete change of clothing (socks, pants, underwear, and shirt) to be kept at school. Again, be certain to label each piece with your child's initials. Please enclose in a **large zip lock bag labeled with your child's name.**

Nappers

Children age 4 1/2 and younger, who are enrolled at Hope for Extended hours beyond 130, are required to have a nap by State law. Please provide a crib-sized "blankie", a twin-sized sheet, a pillow and a pillowcase, (*and, if you wish, a special "lovie"*) that can be kept at school during the week. The bedding will be sent home at the end of each week (or sooner, if necessary) for laundering.

School Field Trips

Field Trips to be announced. Families are generally responsible for arranging their own transportation.

Attendance

As an important courtesy, please call the school and leave a message when your child will be absent, giving a brief reason for the absence. We keep detailed attendance records.

Illness/Absence

Please do not send your child to school if he/she is sick or even if his/her condition is questionable. **A good rule of thumb is to keep your child home for twenty-four hours after all symptoms have passed.** If it is a communicable disease/illness, notify the school—we will need to inform all the parents in your child’s class to be on alert.

If your child becomes ill during class, we will call and request that you take your child home. We understand that this may be problematic for some working parents. In this case, or in the event we are unable to reach you, we ask that you make arrangements with someone who we can contact and release your child to. They can be listed on your application, and this information should be updated as needed in writing.

The Cook County Health Department **Guidelines** **Regarding Children’s Illness and School:**

Children are to be excluded from school if they have the following signs or symptoms:

1. Upper respiratory infection, cough or sore throat.
2. Any gastrointestinal upset, including abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
3. Temperature elevation of greater than one degree. (100 F or higher)
4. Severe pain (including injury).
5. Any rash or skin eruption, until diagnosed and treated.
6. Any eye inflammation or infection, until treated.
7. Head lice, until treated and nits removed.

Medication

The school office must have written parental permission for prescribed medication that is to be given to your child. Prescription drugs must be sent in the prescription container. *No over-the-counter medicines can be given.*

Health Care Plan of Action

1. As the children arrive and go to their class, the teacher is to conduct an informal visual inspection of hair, nose, and exposed skin to check for any possible rash or infection.
2. The head teacher or coordinator is to be called if any child shows symptoms of infection or a health condition. She will decide if the affected child should be sent home, or the parents informed.
3. In case of accidents (or even incidents), the head teacher is to be informed, examine the affected child and decide on what care is appropriate.
4. It is the policy of the school that each regular staff member be trained and certified in first aide and CPR.
5. The staff member who was nearest to the incident should write an accident report (as soon as practically possible), -give one copy to the parents, make a copy for the child's file, and inform the head teacher/coordinator.
6. First aid kits, checked periodically for completeness, are to be kept available in the school office.
7. Known allergies (cited in child's profile, or through other written communication by the child's parents) will be visibly posted where all staff can see it daily.
8. Frequent hand washing is required of staff and children, *especially* during cold and flu season. Hands should be washed with soap and warm water upon arrivals, after toileting, before and after food preparation, before and after eating food, after playing with the water table or playing outdoors, and after possible contact with bodily fluids (i.e. blowing a nose with a tissue etc.).
9. Tables will be wiped daily (or more often) with a bleach solution. Bathrooms will be cleaned on a daily basis (or more often if necessary).
10. Food handling procedures will conform to standards set by the Health Department. One staff member must be trained and certified in Food Sanitation by the State of Illinois. This person will supervise and train others in safe methods and practices in handling food.
11. If a child is unexplainably absent, the class teacher will contact the parents to inquire as to the reason for the absence on the second day of absence.
12. If a child is reported to have a contagious illness (beyond the common cold), and may have exposed others in the classroom, parents will be notified.

Hope Montessori Parent Handbook

Diapering (Two Year Olds)

We will change diapers as necessary in the course of the morning (should they seem uncomfortable, -or we can tell that they've had a bowel movement). The morning children are only here for a short period of time. Please make sure your child has a supply of fresh diapers and wipes at the school. We will let you know when we're running low. We follow the health department guidelines when changing diapers, and wear gloves as a universal precaution. We change children, whenever possible, in the standing-up position. After changing, we may encourage them to sit on the toilet a little.

Please share with us your approach to toileting. We will try to help your child have success with as little stress as possible. We have much experience – and we're happy to share it!

Please note: do not use external rewards/bribes at school (stickers, M&Ms). Rather, we set the stage and watch for signs of readiness. Once we together determine to go to underpants- we ask that you “stick it out”, despite the inconvenience and occasional accident. Resist putting those diapers back on! Donate your leftover diapering supplies to the school, if you like... If we time it correctly, the process is usually brief, -averaging one month's duration.

Children need to be out of diapers before joining our 3-6 Program.

Toileting

Children in our 3-6 programs are required to be out of diapers/pull-ups, and well along their way in the toileting process.

Toys from Home

Toys from home need to stay in your car. They do cause a disturbance in the classroom. Reassure your child that the toy will be waiting for him or her in the car when you return to take him/her home.

Snacks & Lunch

The snacks we provide at school consist mainly of crackers and 100% fruit juice. We are reading labels,- and trying to avoid hydrogenated oils, msg, and high fructose corn syrup. At snack time, we *may* include cheeses, fruits and vegetables, as well, *-paying strict attention to allergy restrictions.* **We have a no nut policy.** No tree nuts or peanuts are allowed at school. We serve Oberweis milk at lunchtime. Children with dairy restrictions may drink water. Please do not

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send juice! We also ask that parents limit sweets and unhealthy snacks ... we wish to set a good example and help the children form good eating habits.

Food Preparation, Laundry, and Flowers

Twice annually, parents are required to provide items for our food preparation/baking activities, and a bouquet of flowers for the children to do flower arranging. They are also asked to take turns doing the laundry for the classroom. This will consist usually of two loads worth (one for white, one for colors) of classroom items such as towels, small cloth napkins, table cloths, baby doll clothing, dusting cloths, our picnic blanket, and a few aprons. A roster will be provided.

Birthdays

For your child's birthday, we will have a simple celebration. On the special day, send a few photos of your child from birth until present. We will use these to help tell a general life story of your child.

In the past, children have brought a special healthy treat for our snack table and a small gift for the classroom in honor of their birthday. Some well-received treats we have had in the past are: granola bars, fruit salad, yogurt, cheeses, carrot, zucchini, bran, or banana muffins... We have even enjoyed preparing Birthday pineapples! Please do not send cakes or candy... they really are not missed and unnecessary. Birthdays are also a great opportunity to share an ethnic favorite. We may have food allergies in the classroom, so please consult the teacher! Some ideas for "gifts" are small objects (i.e. coins, rocks, postcards, interesting knick-knacks...) for our Continent Baskets, a "cool" rock or fossil, a seashell, or a favorite book.

Celebrations

Traditionally at Hope, we celebrate the Seasons and the Civic Holidays of our Country. *We do not formally observe Religious or Commercial Holidays* (though they may be addressed in discussions or as a cultural presentation). **Please do not send treats or goody bags without consulting the teacher!** We wish to respect all of the families within our community, while preserving a peaceful, consistent program.

Contacting Your Child's Teacher/ Communication

Notes from parents are always welcome. If you need to speak to your child's head teacher personally, please send a note with your child, e-mail info@ hope-montessori.com or call (708) 614-7577 to leave a message with the office. If necessary, the teacher will contact you after class. As much as possible, we try to keep adult conversations to a minimum at arrivals and dismissals and within the classroom. We are always willing to discuss your child with you and to help you in any way that we can. We truly enjoy hearing from you, so please keep the communication lines open!

Visiting the Classroom/Observation

One of the best and most delightful ways of learning about the Montessori approach to education is to observe a class in session. All parents are encouraged to come and see their child at work, to watch him/her in contact with the prepared environment and the other children. You can gain many insights into his personality if you observe with purpose. You are always welcome to come and observe, and can make an appointment through the school office.

Recordkeeping/Confidentiality/Your Child's Files

Detailed records are kept of your child's attendance as well as his motor, social, and academic development. Teachers' recordkeeping includes observation/ anecdotal notes, communications /feedback from you, and checklists which track academic work with materials in the environment, social skills mastered in grace and courtesy, and physical movement capabilities. In addition to this, we keep samples of children's artwork and handwriting. All information we have relating to you or your child is considered confidential. We can release these records at your request... If you wish for us to forward records to another school, or discuss your child with anyone, we require your written and signed permission.

1st Grade Readiness Testing

We test our Kindergarten students each January. It has become almost a "rite of passage" activity, something special reserved for the "big kids". Testing helps us to see if there is any area that we need to work on. It serves as a "transition" activity, -a tool to help them prepare for the transition to 1st Grade. We begin to discuss the next exciting step in their education, and set the stage for a smooth transition. Results are discussed at Parent/Teacher conferences, and included in the child's file.

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Conference Days – Reports

Twice annually, father and mother are both encouraged to meet with the teacher to “touch base”, and share observations of their child’s development.

Please note carefully the designated dates on the current school calendar. A schedule will be posted as we approach these dates. Plan ahead for a sitter,- these meetings are for adults only!

Through informal contacts and conferences, you will be regularly informed of your child’s progress. **We also highly desire and prize feedback from you!** Let us know if you have questions, concerns, anecdotes, or *compliments* (i.e.: you think we’re doing a good job), -don’t feel you need to wait for conference days!

Newsletter

The newsletter will be issued three or four times a year. Parent contributions are always welcome.

Change in Routine

Please let us know if there is a change in your child’s routine, i.e. parent trips, new babysitters, overnight or special visitors, moving to a new house... These events, so important to your child, may affect his/her work style or behavior at school.

IV. Showing Support

Time and Talent- The Gift of Volunteering

Many parents have asked in the past about ways to become involved. At Hope Montessori we admire your dedication and appreciate your generosity. Although we strictly limit in-classroom volunteering, there are many opportunities for parents to lend a helping hand. Let us know if you are interested in any of the following areas, or have other ideas...

Hospitality Parents assist in parent events and activities by providing desserts and refreshments, setting up chairs, etc.

Sound and Reading Parents work under the direction of the teacher in providing short lessons with the sandpaper letters and emergent readers.

Library Parents take turns with “library duty” and help provide books (and return them when they are due!), which support current classroom activities and interests.

Sewing Parents repair/ make materials for the classroom such as napkins, aprons, and dust cloths.

Gardening Parent -for those who enjoy the work and rewards a beautiful garden offers. We need help “putting the gardens to bed” and planting bulbs in the Fall and guiding the planting in the Spring during the Outdoor Workshop. Remember, all are welcome to harvest from our herb garden!

Montessori Stories Parent All parents are invited to share anecdotes about their experiences with their children and Montessori... If you wish to share with us, drop a note... if it is something we could use in a newsletter or on our website, we will first ask your permission.

Art/ Craft/Music Parent Do you have an idea for an activity or a special skill you would like to share? Can you play a musical instrument? Let us know!

Culture/Career/Special Talent Parent If you would like to share a culture or career or special talent (e.g. yoga) with the children, let us know and we will gladly help you develop a presentation for the children. Where possible, we like to give multi-sensory experiences.

An example: “Italy” included making pizza and gelato with the children, dipping bread in olive oil, herbs, and cheese... listening to a variety of Italian music, and learning a song...touching concrete items unique to Italy, coloring in the Italian flag, finding Italy on the world globe, looking at pictures of Italy and sharing stories about ancestors who have immigrated from Italy to America, learning words in the Italian language, and so on...

Baking/ Food Prep Parent We love to eat, especially things that we’ve made... even “finicky” children are more likely to taste new things (i.e. *vegetables*) when they’ve had a hand in the preparation.

Though we are generally prohibited (except when all parents are present) from sharing foods that are prepared at home due to state regulations (sadly, the days of sending homemade goodies are gone), we *are* allowed to prepare food in the classroom together because we hold a current certificate in Food and Sanitation...

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Fundraising We ask all our families to support seasonal fundraisers. Selling flowers? Pass the order form around! Spring fashion show? Care to walk the runway with your child? Maybe going bowling is more up your alley... Fundraisers are necessary to help the school pay its escalating costs without raising the tuition or cutting quality.

Friends of Hope- PTO Do you wish to be more involved? Show your support! Please join! We will hold regular meetings and form committees for different school events. It is a great way for parents to meet other parents! *Plan ahead for a sitter,- these meetings are for adults only!*

Mother/Child, Father/Child, Grandparent's Open House:

No substitutions, please! We offer these events as opportunities for specified loved ones to come into the school together with their student to share a special time together and learn more about our school. *A sitter is needed for non-student siblings! Mark your calendars!*

Parent Meetings/Lectures

Lectures and discussions for parents are intended to provide helpful information. As a parent, you are your child's first educator. We see the need for you to become involved in your child's education. The aim of these meetings is to aid you in your task of parenthood.

Please note carefully the designated dates on the current school calendar! *Plan ahead for a sitter,- these meetings are for adults only!*

Television/Video/Computer Games

Current surveys indicate that today, young children are spending too much time passively sitting in front of the TV. As parents, we must make deliberate healthy choices for our children...

We ask that you carefully monitor the content of the programs your child is watching, as well as the amount of time spent in front of the television. We also encourage your participation in "Turn off the TV" weeks during the school year.

Alumni

We love to see the children as they continue to grow! Our families hold a lasting place in our hearts... Feedback from parents and past student tells us that the feeling is mutual... Should you move, please give us your new address. Email, notes, cards, by phone... we really love to hear from you.

V. Freedom and Discipline Policies

This Children's House establishes the following **Code of Discipline**:

A

1. The children shall be guided within the spirit of safety and respect.
2. The environment shall be prepared such that the children will feel safe at all times.
3. The staff shall foster a model of respect for oneself, the environment, and all others present.
4. No physical or mental punishment shall befall the children in this environment.
5. A sense of peace and community shall prevail among all who enter here.
6. A guideline that is not negotiable is that no child will be allowed to behave in a way that is injurious to him/herself or others.

B.

1. If a child exhibits disordered behaviors, the class team should discuss in their weekly meetings if the problems are open to an educational solution and how the solutions can be implemented.
2. If the disordered behavior continues or if the child shows emotional disturbances, the Administrator should be informed. The Administrator should observe the child and discuss the possible solutions with the teachers – including asking the parents to come observe the child within the classroom. A home visit may be scheduled. The parents are asked to give input on home behavior, their approach to discipline, nutrition, sleep patterns, etc. that may prove invaluable to the process of seeking how to best understand the child and meet the child's needs.
3. The Administrator, together with the Lead Teacher will make any decisions about whether or not to suggest to a family that professional outside help be sought and/or a trial period should be set, or whether it is necessary to request the child's immediate withdrawal from the program.
4. Basis for requesting a withdrawal would be e.g. that the child's problems require professional rather than merely educational intervention, or that for any reason, Hope Montessori deems it is unable to serve the needs of the child or the child's family, or due to chronic tardiness and absence.

VI. Emergencies:**

Injury

Children are often in motion and interacting with one another and the classroom materials. We pride ourselves on the safety record of our school. As a staff, we are highly vigilant.

Unfortunately, accidents do happen. Should a serious injury occur to a student, the child will be made as comfortable as possible, parents and medical personnel will be alerted and paramedics called, if deemed necessary. An accident report form, filled out in duplicate is given to the family (a copy given to the school office). Accidents are documented in the school health log in the school office.

School Closings

In the event of severe weather conditions (e.g. blizzard, tornadoes), school closings will be broadcast on the major radio stations. Our school will be listed with www.emergencyclosings.com . An outgoing message on our phone line will also tell of the closing. Many of our families travel a great distance. We want everyone to stay safe!

There are no makeup days for emergency school closings/snow days.

Fire Evacuation Plan

1. In case of fire alarm drill or evidence of fire, staff members will escort the children to the outdoor environment using exits provided. Exit routes will be posted prominently within the classroom.
2. The teacher will carry the attendance book, and attendance will be taken upon reaching the outdoor environment.
3. The children will gather at a safe distance from the building.
4. Conditions will be monitored until drill ends or evidence of fire is extinguished.
5. Children will be comforted, parents will be contacted.

Tornado Drill Procedure

The process is as follows:

1. As soon as the alarm sounds – the teacher stops all activities and gets the attention of all children – and in a clear and firm voice says: “Storm Drill – Leave your work and go to your station.”
2. While the assistant shows the children to their stations – seated in the classrooms against the innermost wall away from the windows. The head teacher opens windows on the north and south sides of the

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- building. This can prevent rapid change of pressure and undue strain on the building.
3. When the teacher has completed this and children are seated comfortably – the teacher calls the roll and checks to see that everyone is present. Line activities may begin – but children must remain seated at their stations.
 4. In the case of an actual storm – parents and others who come to pick up their children – are invited to stay with them during the alarm – as cars are more dangerous places to be in than a safe building. However, the parent has the right to decide for his own child whether they choose to stay.

National Emergency/ Acts of War/ Terrorism

In the event of an emergency, we will do all in our power to keep the children from any harm. Some points you should be aware of:

- We would be in communication with the Tinley Park Police Department.
- A phone list is in place to contact families in case of an emergency.
- Should a National Emergency situation occur while your child is with us, we will do our best to keep the children safe and calm until you (or someone designated by you) is able to pick your child up.
- Television coverage of tragic situations will not be shown to the children.

Please closely monitor their exposure at home, as well.

- Provisions (bottled water/ snacks) are on hand in school in case of an emergency.

****Please keep our contact /permission to release information up to date, should we need to reach you in any sort of an emergency situation.**

Child Abuse and Neglect

Licensed childcare providers are among the Illinois professionals legally mandated by the State to report immediately to the Department of Children and Family Services any reasonable belief that a child in their care may be abused or neglected. Of course, other persons are encouraged to make reports when they have reasonable cause to believe a child may be abused or neglected.

Licensing standards prohibit physical punishment. Although abuse and neglect in licensed childcare facilities are rare, parents need to be alert to any signs of physical injury or sexual abuse. If you think your child may have been abused, call the Illinois Child Abuse Hot Line: 1-800-25ABUSE

The above passage is excerpted from "Child Care Choices" published by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

VII. Basic Montessori

***Maria Montessori: The Woman, The Educator**

Maria Montessori, born in 1870, was the first woman granted a medical degree by an Italian university. At age 28 she was engaged as a medical professional to assess the physical needs of “defected children.” Influence by the work of Seguin and Itard in France, Montessori designed materials and techniques which allowed the children to work in areas previously considered beyond their capacity. Montessori’s great triumph came when these children took state examinations along with normal children. Her “defectives” passed the exam. Montessori concluded that if retarded could be brought to the same academic level as normal children, something must be drastically wrong with the education of normal children.

Montessori’s life work began with a group of slum children in 1907 when she opened her famous Casa Dei Bambini. Though her observations of and work with the children, she discovered their remarkable, almost effortless, ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings. Children teach themselves! This simple and profound truth inspired Montessori’s lifelong pursuit of education reform, curriculum development, methodology, psychology, teaching and teacher training—all based on her dedication to further the self-creating process of the child.

Dr. Montessori died in 1952. Today, after almost 75 years of international application, the Montessori Method thrived in the United States with more than 3,000 schools established since 1957. Montessori schools are not only found in the private sector, but are increasingly implemented within public school systems and Federal daycare programs. Montessori’s theories concerning the individual child, the peaceful unfolding of self, the absorbent mind, and the prepared classroom environment, - and the deep respect and awe with which she beheld the child are qualities seen in classrooms the world over today.

***The Prepared Environment: A Montessori Concept**

The Montessori classroom is a “living room” for children. Extending out from all directions are open shelves with bright arrays of solid geometric solids, knobbed puzzle maps, colored beads, metal templates, various specialized blocks and rods. In another corner are a small child’s sink, a cutting board, a dishpan and real china dishes. Nearby stand a clothes rack and washbasin with a scrubbing board... there is an easel with paints... There are plants, flowers in tiny vases, and art hung low on the wall... soft music is often heard playing.

The Prepared Environment is an aesthetically beautiful, age-appropriate learning environment, - which anticipates the general developmental needs of the children it is to serve. It invites the children to explore and make discoveries. Many of the available materials are hands-on, designed to teach specific lessons, and have a built-in control of error... The child is encouraged to take an active role in his own education.

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“The objects surrounding the child should look solid and attractive to him and the “house of the child” should be lovely and pleasant in all its particulars. It is almost possible to say that there is a mathematical relationship between the beauty of his surroundings and the activity of the child. He will make discoveries rather more voluntarily in a gracious setting than in an ugly one.”

- ***Maria Montessori***

Freedom and Respect

Each child is unique. At Hope, the prepared environment allows children to learn at their own pace, in a non-competitive atmosphere. Children are encouraged to be self-directed. Given a smorgasbord of healthy choices, the child is free to pursue and absorb what he craves for his own personal development.

When the child is respectful of himself, others, and the environment, he is in turn respected and trusted. Respect and trust of the child is the root of the Montessori Approach.

Key Tenets of the Montessori Method

§ Children are to be respected as individuals.

§ Children create themselves through purposeful activity.

§ The most important years for learning are from birth to age six.

§ Children possess unusual sensitivity and mental powers for absorbing and learning from their environment

***Practical Life: A House For Children**

When a young child enters the *casa*, the area of the Montessori classroom called “Practical Life” may be considered the link to the child’s home environment and thus an extension of the child’s developmental process. The child spontaneously and naturally seeks order in independence through movement and purposeful activity. The *practical life* materials involve children in precise movements, allowing them to concentrate, to work in their own pace uninterrupted, to complete their work, and to gain internal

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satisfaction. At 3 years old, children are often more interested in the scrubbing motion of washing a table than they are in getting the table clean. The *process* of the activity is more important than the *product*.

The *practical life* materials fulfill specific purposes in the real world for children: they learn to button their shirts, tie their shoes, wash their hands, - free from adult help. The child also cares for the beauty of the environment: polishing wood, scrubbing the floor, dusting the shelves... The child-sized materials beckon to the child, allowing him to grow more and more independent. He chooses work as his needs unfold.

Practical Life centers the child in a social atmosphere where “please” and “thank you” and a polite offer of “Do you need help with your work?” are important parts of conversation... Grace and courtesy skills help us get along with one another. They convey considerate respect. *In the Montessori classroom, each child is treated with respect, and is therefore respectful.*

***Sensorial: Building Imagination Through Real Experiences**

Children live in a world of senses. In order to continue their creative task, children need to highlight impressions they have already received. Through sight, touch, sound, taste, and smell, the *sensorial* materials “throw a spotlight” on reality. For example: the concepts of length are explored in work with the red rods. Children internalize the reality of what is short and what is long, what is shorter, and what is longer. Language is clarified and vocabulary is sharpened. Because these rods are rendered in unit lengths from one to ten, they also provide a basis for mathematical gradation. Another example: roughness and smoothness are experienced by touching rough sandpaper and smooth polished wood. Later, these lessons are repeated with the sandpaper globe helping the child to distinguish between land (sandpaper) and water (smooth). Sensorial materials are used for clarification of large, small, heavy; thick and thin; loud and soft; high and low; hot and cold; colors, tastes; smells; and for plane and solid geometric forms.

The sensorial material is really a key to the world and is the basis for abstraction.

“Imagination can have only a sensorial basis. The sensory education, which prepares for accurate perception of all different details in the qualities of things, is the foundation of all observation. This helps us to collect from the external world the material world for the imagination.”

- Maria Montessori

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***Mathematics: Materializing the Abstract**

The Montessori approach to math is special for many reasons. All operations emerge from the concrete manipulation of “materialized abstractions” such as rods, beads, spindles, cubes, cards and counters, etc. The children do not merely learn to count; they are also able to visualize the whole structure of our numeration system and to perform the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with an overview in mind. Children are also presented with the possibilities of fact memorization at a young age where combinations like $3+2=$ offer a real fascination at age 4. If this sensitive period is missed, rote drill will be necessary later on. Materials are sequenced so that conditions for mathematical discovery will always occur. Problem solving and formulae once contributed by the teacher’s directive are materialized in groups of objects, which lead to independent learning. Children retain better any information, which they “figure out” on their own.

The Sciences- “We Hold the World in our Hands”

In Montessori, the young child is exposed to / and invited to explore a rich array of scientific concepts. Basic Biology, Geology, Geography, History, Astronomy, World Cultures, Ecology, Physics... are introduced to the children in a very natural, concrete manner.

I remember a young two year old sitting mesmerized at the base of a tall tree in the yard. She was looking up and staring at the branches moving in the breeze, the leaves fluttering and glistening, -listening to the soft hushing sound. She looked so peaceful. Her face was filled with awe, and she said, “This is a *mighty* tree!” aloud, -to no one in particular...

The child is part of the Cosmos. We are all connected to one another. Montessori referred to a child’s introduction to the areas of Science as “Cosmic Education”. The aim of the Sciences is to better understand our world, and the relationships and connections within it. With these very young children, we keep it very simple. We go outside and share in the experience of the outdoors. We dig up worms. We notice ants, flowers, tree buds, blades of grass... snowflakes. We feed the birds. We notice small things, and *mighty* things. We notice clouds in the sky. We wonder together...

“If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.”

-Rachel Carson, *A Sense of Wonder*

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***Reading and Writing/Pathways to Culture**

Reading and *writing* are the keys which can uncover, conserve, and synthesize knowledge. The preschool children are immersed in the dynamics of their own language development. Using simple alphabet cutouts and sandpaper letters, young children are able to effortlessly link sounds, symbols, their shapes, and their written formation.

As the children improve their reading of words, they want to know more names of things. The classroom is filled with pictures, labels, puzzles bearing the names of animals, plants, geometric figures, countries, and landforms, for example. From the very beginning, reading and writing are tied to culture. The mastery of skills is propelled by interest and love of the environment.

***Art and Music Integrated into the Day**

Just as we acknowledge the different stages of growth for *practical life, sensorial, language, and mathematics*, so must we link stages of development with *the arts*. With relative ease, *art* and *music* exercises are introduced into the environment. Various media are available such as: clay, crayons, oil pastels, colored chalk, pasting, collage, painting, etc. The more experiences the child is given in art, the more he is able to express himself. *Music* is the same. “The primary class offers, through the use of instruments, widened avenues for musical exploration: sameness and differences in timbre, of rhythmic gestures through walking on the line, of culture through the music as related to *history* and *geography*.” (Jones and Jones, 1978). The arts give the children another dimension of the curriculum in and of themselves.

***The Individual Child**

Early childhood education has come to accept today what Montessori discovered so long ago: the child under six has a genius capacity for mental absorption. The “absorbent mind” will never repeat its miraculous ability to absorb the native tongue, to perfect movement, or to internalize order. Never will these sensitivities be more alive than in the preschool years.

The entering child is gentle and vulnerable with a need for love, protection, friends, and intellectual stimulation. These are serious needs. To serve children directly in what they need; to give help is sometimes an obstruction. Therefore, the Montessori prepared environment allows children to act freely on their own initiative, meeting needs through individual, spontaneous activity.

The children learn to work quietly and intently on their own tasks. They use the materials with a sense of perfection and order seldom found even in adults. They are building concentration and self-discipline.

Because the materials are scientifically selected, children are able to learn skills that were previously reserved for development at a later age. Reading and writing are treated as an extension of spoken language. Young children have a singular mathematical interest, and therefore, with the use of concrete materials, they can be exposed to all four mathematical functions with large numbers before they are six. And

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because these children are characterized by “absorbent minds” the work seems untiring and effortless.

“The Child should love everything that he learns for his mental and emotional growths are linked. Whatever is presented to him must be made beautiful and clear.”

- ***Maria Montessori***

***The Child Forms A Community**

The Montessori classroom is not merely a place for individual learning. There is a mix of ages. A three-year-old may be washing clothes. A four-year-old nearby is working with alphabet cutouts. The five-year-old down the way is performing the operation of division using a special set of beads. Some children are talking and working with friends. A few are watching. The children work freely and when they choose to complete their task, they return the material to its proper place. There is a variety of activity and a great deal of movement. The Montessori preschool is a community of workers building a heritage of mutual enrichment. The older 5-year-old learns through teaching the younger child. The younger child is inspired to do more advanced work by having older children working in the same environment.

Children at this age enjoy and need social courtesies. They are interested in knowing how to greet, to shake hands, and to excuse themselves, for example. They like to see well-dressed people and they like to be well-dressed themselves. Classrooms have low mirrors and special aids for self-care. In this free environment children learn to express the best of themselves by improving their social skills as they acquire manners and consideration for others.

Although most of the class time is spent in individual or small group format, during some part of each day the entire community of children might engage in whole class activities such as storytelling, singing, movement activities, or large muscle activities. When the children go outdoors for “large motor” activities, for gardening or nature walks, the unique needs of the individual child merge as part of the vibrant community whole, usually at the end of the day.

***The Montessori Parent As Primary Educators**

No matter how you regard the school, you must realize as parents you have the greatest influence on your child’s life because of your unique love. No one knows and cares for your child as well as you do. Educate means “to lead”. As parents you have the special opportunity to lead the child into activities, which are your hobbies, your chores, your spiritual and intellectual life, and your appreciation for the environment. What you share with your own, they remember with a special relish. You desire what is best for your children even though this may involve sacrifice. You want to give, but not indulge, serve but not over serve, allow freedom but not license. The school will be a natural extension of your home and will help in establishing a balance.

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The directress certainly can work with the child uniquely in the prepared environment and in the context of the other children, but your relationship is still key. As your child starts out on this great adventure called Montessori, remember that you are the most important adult, and for your effort there is no substitute.

“The love we find in infancy shows what kind of love should reign ideally in the grown-up world, a love able of its own nature to inspire sacrifice, the dedication of one ego to another, of one’s self to the service of others.”

-Maria Montessori

***The Montessori Teacher as Guide**

The Montessori teacher is a child advocate in the deepest sense and has a cultivated respect for the child’s total being. As both the psychological and educational director of the classroom, the Montessori teacher responds to the essential needs of the children through careful observation first. The child may repeat a certain activity, reinforcing knowledge of a material. The teacher knows when to intervene so that concentration and involvement is encouraged and not interrupted. The emphasis is on “work cycle”; the child is his own timekeeper. The trained teacher allows for a natural pace, which features *unconscious* absorption and better retention. Support is given during low productive phases of work, which then build to peak involvements as the day progresses. Teacher-scheduled time is minimized so that the child’s creative choice is given first priority.

***Collaboration: Parents and Teachers**

Parents and teachers need to work together in order to support and follow the whole Montessori process. The school is not a drop-off place; effective use of the school comes best through communication. Children often confide in their parents, and it is important to know how the child perceives the day. On the other side of this coin, the teacher sees the child in a “scientific environment” and has a unique facility for serving children in the context of other children and materials. The parent and teacher each hold jigsaw pieces which, when coming together, generate a more complete picture.

The Montessori program also offers parents creative principles for redesigning aspects of their home, for approaching the child with new kinds of tasks and challenges, for discipline, and general understanding. Parent education gives parents another way of seeing, which may enhance decisions related to child development. Thinking and talking about children along with other concerned adults offers heightened awareness and a better response to your child’s needs.

***Is Montessori For Your Child?**

Children- rich and poor, gifted and special- from a variety of cultures all over the world have benefited from Montessori. Your child will also prosper in his or her own subtle, creative fashion.

Academics readiness is not the issue. Whether the child can count, identify colors, or use a scissors properly is not the focus. The directress is interested in the whole child's ability to communicate and cooperate, and most importantly, the child's willingness to accept and master new experiences. Based on this precept, it is important for parents not to push skills on children to make them ready.

Your child is coming to school because you sense that this is the right time. Perhaps the toys at home no longer seem interesting. The child is bored and needs new friends and new horizons. Maybe you child has already had some experiences away from you and they have been positive. When your child is ready for an experience apart from you, he or she will benefit and grow in this new kind of independence.

In Montessori, we begin with practical and social skills, not just academic. Keeping track of belongings, putting things away, dressing oneself, sharing an adult, sharing materials, respecting the limits of the community are some of the many aspects of total development, which are the initial benefits of the Montessori preschool class. These are the foundations for growing independence.

*Excerpted and paraphrased from "A Parent's Introduction to Montessori Preschool" by David Kahn in cooperation with North American Teacher's Association and The Association Montessori International, USA.

The Importance of the Kindergarten Year in the Montessori Classroom

February: re-enrollment time once again; in thousands of Montessori schools all over America parents of four-and- young- five year olds are trying to decide whether or not they should keep their sons and daughters in Montessori for kindergarten or send them off to the local schools next fall.

The advantages of using the local schools often seem obvious, while those of staying in Montessori are often not at all clear. When you can use the local schools for free, why would anyone want to invest thousands of dollars in another year's tuition?

It's a fair questions and it deserves a careful answer. Obviously, there is no one right answer for every child. Often the decision depends on where each family places its priorities and how strongly parents sense that one school or another more closely fits in with their hopes and dreams for their children.

Naturally, to some degree the answer is also often connected to the question of family income. However, we are often amazed at how often families with very modest means who place a high enough priority on their children's education will scrape together the tuition needed to keep them in Montessori.

So here are a few answers to some of the questions parents often ask about Montessori for the Kindergarten age child by Tim Seldin with Dr. Elizabeth Coe. Dr. Elizabeth Coe is the Past President of the American Montessori Society and Director of the Houston Montessori Teacher Education Center in Houston, Texas. Tim Seldin is the President of the Montessori Foundation and headmaster Emeritus of the Barrie School in Silver Spring, Maryland. *

What would be the most important advantages of keeping my five-year old in Montessori?

Montessori is an approach to working with children that is carefully based on what we've learned about children's cognitive, neurological and emotional development from a century of research. Although sometimes misunderstood, the Montessori Approach has been acclaimed as the most developmentally appropriate model currently available by some of America's top experts on early childhood and elementary education.

One important difference between what Montessori offers the five-year-old and what is offered by many of today's Kindergarten Programs has to do with how it helps the young child to learn how to learn.

Over recent years, educational research has increasingly shown that students in many schools don't really understand most of what they are being taught.

Howard Gardner, Harvard Psychologist and author of the best-selling book: "The Unschooled Mind," goes so far as to suggest that "Many schools have fallen into a pattern of giving kids exercises and drills that result in their getting answers on tests that look like understanding. Most students, from as young as those in kindergarten to students in some of the finest colleges in America, do not understand what they've studied, in the most basic sense of the term. *They lack the capacity to take knowledge learned in one setting and apply it appropriately in a different setting.*

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Study after study has found that, by and large, even the best students in the best schools can't do that." (On Teaching For Understanding: A Conversation with Howard Gardner, by Ron Brandt, Educational Leadership magazine, ASCD, 1994.)

Montessori is focused on teaching for understanding. In a primary classroom, three and four-year-olds receive the benefit of two years of sensorial preparation for academic skills by working with the concrete Montessori learning materials. This concrete sensorial experience gradually allows the child to form a mental picture of concepts like how big is a thousand, how many hundreds make up a thousand, and what is really going on when we borrow or carry numbers in mathematical operations.

The value of the sensorial experiences that the younger children have had in Montessori has often been under-estimated by both parents and educators.

Research is very clear that young children learn by observing and manipulation their environment, not through textbooks and workbook exercises. The Montessori materials give the child concrete sensorial impression of abstract concepts, such as long division, that become the foundation for a lifetime understanding.

Because Montessori teachers are well trained in child development, they normally know how to present information in developmentally appropriate ways. In many, many American schools, children do exercises and fill in workbook pages with little understanding. There is a great deal of rote learning. Superficially, it may seem that these children are learning the material. However, all too often a few months down the road little of what they "learned" will be retained and it will be rare for the children to be able to use their knowledge and skills in new situations. Learning to be organized and learning to be focused is as important as any academic work. *Doing worksheets quickly can be impressive to parents, but there is rarely any deep learning going on.* More and more educational researchers are beginning to focus on whether students, whatever young or adult, really understand or have simply memorized correct answers.

In a nut shell, what would be the most important short-term disadvantages of sending my five-year old to the local schools?

When a child transfers from Montessori to a new Kindergarten, she spends the first few months adjusting to a new class, a new teacher, and a whole new system with different expectations.

This, along with the fact that Kindergartens have a much lower set of expectations for 5 year olds than do most Montessori programs, severely cuts into the learning that could occur during this crucial year of their lives. In a few cases, Kindergarten Montessori children may not look as if they are not as advanced as a child in a very academically accelerated program, but what they do know they usually know very well. Their understanding of the decimal system, place value, mathematical operations, and similar information is usually very sound. With reinforcement as they grow older, it becomes internalized and a permanent part of whom they are.

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When they leave Montessori before they have had the time to internalize these early concrete experiences, their early learning often evaporates because it is neither reinforced nor commonly understood.

In a class with such a wide age range of children, won't my five-year-old spend the year taking care of younger children instead of doing his or her own work?

The five year olds in Montessori classes often help the younger children with their work, actually teaching lessons or correcting errors.

Anyone who has ever had to teach a skill to someone else may recall that the very process of explaining a new concept or helping someone practice a new skill leads the teacher to learn as much, if not more, than the pupil. This is supported by research. *When one child tutors another, the tutor normally learns more from the experience than the person being tutored.* Experiences that facilitate development of independence and autonomy are often very limited in traditional schools.

Since most children will eventually have to go to the neighborhood schools, wouldn't it be better for them to make the transition in Kindergarten rather than in First Grade?

In most cases, we believe that the First Grade Year would be a better time to make the shift. *By staying in Montessori, children gain an important year in the most appropriate educational setting, -giving them time to mature and gain confidence both academically and socially.* **Maria Montessori's 3 year mixed age groups were arrived at for very well thought out reasons. At 5, children are still in the Absorbent Mind phase. The richly prepared Montessori environment is optimal for the way they still learn and allows children to continually "hit the spot" and meets their individual needs. When they turn 6, they begin to shift into the age of reason and become more symbolic in their thinking. If they are well grounded in concrete experiences, they will pull on this as they begin to look at their world with a new perspective. The Montessori hands-on learning has set a solid foundation for their future.**

The American Montessori Society tells of one father who wrote: "We considered the school years ahead. We realized a child usually does his best if he has good learning habits, a sound basis in numbers and math, and the ability to read. We realized that he has had an excellent two-year start in his Montessori school. If he were to transfer now to Kindergarten, he would probably go no farther than he is now, whereas if he stays in Montessori, he will reap the benefits of his past work under the enthusiastic guidance of teachers who will share his joy in learning."

Many families are aware that by the end of the Kindergarten year, Montessori students will often have developed academic skills that may be beyond those of children enrolled in most American Kindergarten programs. However, parents

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should remember that academic progress is not our ultimate goal. *Our real hope is that the children will have an incredible sense of self-confidence, enthusiasm for learning, and will feel closely bonded to their teachers and classmates. We want much more than competency in the basic skills; we want them to honestly enjoy school and feel good about themselves as students.*

Once children have developed a high degree of self-confidence, independence, and enthusiasm for the learning process, they normally can adapt to all sorts of new situations. While there are wonderful and exciting reasoning to carefully consider keeping a child in Montessori through elementary school and beyond, by the time they are first grade they will typically be able to go off to their new school with not only a vibrant curiosity and excitement about making new friends and learning new things.

If I keep my child in Montessori for Kindergarten, won't he/she be bored in a traditional First Grade?

Montessori children by the end of age five are normally curious, self-confident learners who look forward to going to school. They are normally engaged, enthusiastic learners who honestly want to learn and ask excellent questions. What teacher wouldn't give her left arm for a room filled with children like that? Well, truthfully over the years we've found some who consider these children "disruptive." Disruptive, you ask. *A polite, independent Montessori child, disruptive?*

Well, first off, let's remember that Montessori children are real human beings, and not all children who attend Montessori fit the idealized description. However, enough do that the idealized generalization is often fairly accurate.

Montessori children by age six have spent three or four years in a school where they were treated with honesty and respect. While there are clear expectations and ground rules, within that framework their opinions and questions were taken quite seriously. Unfortunately, there are still some teachers and schools where children who ask questions are seen as challenging authority. You can imagine an independent Montessori child asking his new teacher, *but why do I have to ask each time I need to use the bathroom? Or why do I have to stop my work right now?*

So the honest answer is that it depends on the teacher and the school.

From an academic viewpoint, Montessori children will generally be doing very well by the end of Kindergarten, although, once again, that is not our ultimate objective. The program offers them enriched lessons in math, reading, language, and a wide range of lessons in science, geography and other cultural areas. If they are ready, they will normally develop excellent skills and become quite "culturally literate."

When one of these children enters a traditional First Grade, they may have already mastered the skills that their new school considered First Grade curriculum. Some Montessori children are still more advanced. Once upon a time in America, elementary schools had only one course of study for every child at each grade level, and the only option for children who were academically gifted was to skip them ahead one or two grade levels. This created all sorts of

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resentments, jealousies among students, and social stresses on children who socially and physically still belonged with their own age group. However, as Dr. Montessori's educational strategies have been incorporated to a greater or lesser extent by more and more school systems, *it is becoming more common to find elementary schools that are willing and able to adapt their curriculum to meet the needs of individual students who are ready for accelerated work.*

If the school does not meet all of their needs, parents must supplement and support their children's interests and hobbies. Perhaps parents need to help the schools work for solutions. A Parent's Job is Never Done!

Socially, won't my child have "missed the bus?"

What a dim view! Don't underestimate these children! Remember, a Montessori setting gives them ample opportunity to flex social muscles. Socially, the Kindergarten year is the leadership year...

They take this role seriously... They spend a large amount of time cooperating and collaborating with their peers. They form friendships that may last a lifetime. They make friends and learn how to keep them- as well as gain the confidence to make more! As parents, our attitudes can help. Put a positive spin on things!

Anecdote: My daughter and I went to her new school for an Open House. We were very excited to go to meet her new teacher. The Classroom roster assignments were posted in the hallway of the 1st grade classrooms. Many parents were there, assailing the Principal with concerns and requests to the tune of, "My Johnny is not in the same class as his friend, Steven- could you please change this?!" etc. My daughter was quietly scanning the lists for her own name and, having found it, exclaimed: "*Mom! Look at all the new friends I haven't met yet!*" The much-harassed Principal, having heard her, turned around and introduced herself to us both. My daughter then initiated a handshake! The principal was so impressed (I was so proud, too)...It was the beginning of a long and happy relationship.....*My daughter's positive outlook was formed by her experiences in Montessori and my own attitude.*

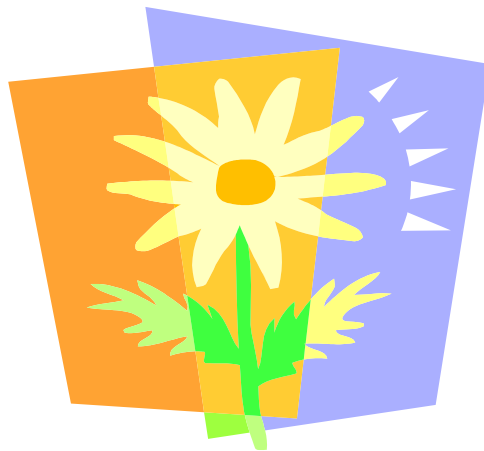
Children who attend Montessori may have many advantages. They love learning and are curious explorers. They are confident. If they do not know the answer, they know they can find it. They are active rather than passive learners. They are self-disciplined and self-directed. They are responsible and take initiative. They think for themselves. They are kind to others...

Remember our long term goals for our children: to love learning, to be confident in themselves, to be happy and competent in their daily lives, happy in their friendships, and to contribute to society and make this world a better place...It begins with our children, now.

- Added comments in purple by Ms. Traci

A.M.S. Code of Ethics

As American Montessori Society members, we pledge to conduct ourselves professionally and personally in ways that will reflect our respect for each other and for the children we serve. We will do whatever is within our talents and capacity to protect the right of each child to have the freedom and opportunity to develop his full potential without regard to race, sex, color, creed, or national origin.



Hope Montessori welcomes all children and their families without regard to ethnic or religious background.

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