

Montessori Academy of Northern Colorado
Parent Handbook

Philosophy of a Montessori School

General

Montessori Education is based on the principle that every child carries within, the potential of the adult he is to become. Dr. Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. The aim is to assist the child to educate himself. The aim is also to develop within the child a love of learning and a thirst for knowledge which will remain long after the regular school day or school years are over.

The Toddler Classroom

The Toddler Classroom is a unique setting in which the young child has room to explore and gain knowledge of his/her surroundings. Children that between the ages of 12 months (and walking) to 36 months are in this area. The materials are easy to manipulate and geared for toddlers. Bottles brought from home must be labeled as well as clothing etc. Please bring a blanket for nap time and let us know if your child has a "special" stuffed animal to bring as well.

The Preschool Classroom

The Montessori classroom is geared to the child's size, pace and the interest of children between the ages of three and six years. The Montessori materials are divided into three basic groups. Practical Life exercises help to develop hand-eye coordination, concentration, sense of order and organizational skills. The Sensorial Work provides the means by which the child learns to discriminate by using all the senses. The Academic Material awakens the child's interest in language, math, geography, history and science.

The environment, rather than the child, is structured and controlled so that each child has a maximum freedom at using the materials which will enhance his/her current stage of development. Montessori combines freedom and structure in a truly integrated way; children are free to do what they want within the framework of the materials, which are themselves structured teaching tools. The materials lead the children gradually through a series of structured steps to a higher level of experiences. Dr. Maria Montessori started the "quiet learning revolution". Many of the

materials she developed can be found in the mainstream early childhood classrooms, but the philosophy and the deep respect for the integrity of the child are only found in the true Montessori early childhood classroom.

Teach Me to Teach Myself

Effective learning requires an attentive disposition in each learning opportunity. Through a series of absorbing activities and experiments, the child forms habits of extended attention, thus increasing the ability to concentrate. The application of these principles provides the following:

1. A positive attitude towards learning -- children achieve success, so building confidence in themselves.
2. Self-confidence as an independent learner -- each new step is built on what is already mastered. This removes the negative experience of failure, thus building an inner confidence and contributing to self-motivation.
3. Development of memory-motor skills -- tasks are designed to involve large and small muscles, enabling the child to gain control over movements.
4. An abiding curiosity -- by being provided a rich environment, the natural curiosity is expanded. This is an essential element in learning.
5. Initiative and persistence -- the child selects the work, completes the task, and finishes by replacing the materials. This full cycle promotes initiative and perseverance.
6. Discrimination and judgment -- by working with the materials the child is able to learn how to categorize and sort out the different aspects within the environment.
7. Social Development -- the complete classroom environment develops an understanding and appreciation of what is meant by respect for others.
8. Inner security and a sense of order -- the organized classroom, the materials and the Monday through Friday schedule help the child's need for order and foster its development within the child.
9. Development of creative intelligence and imagination -- the child is encouraged to implement the feelings and perceptions gained from this total experience. By taking thousands of clear perceptions from well planned exercises, the child acquires the mental building blocks needed later for grouping the meaning of words, ideas, and concepts required for learning how to learn effectively.

Non-discriminatory Policy

We are a private school offering a Montessori education to those enrolled. We aim to provide each child with an individual developmentally

appropriate education program within the framework of a full Montessori curriculum and philosophy. This includes the use of manipulative materials on the floor, and at the table. We work toward, and therefore the child has to be capable of, achieving independence with an inner self-discipline, self motivation, and love of learning as well as care of self, others and the environment. We admit children of any race, color, nationality or ethnic origin. Provisions are made to accommodate children with special needs who are able to function and benefit from our program.

Age

Your child will gain the full benefit of his/her Montessori experience by attending for the three year programs. Therefore early enrollment is desirable, and preference for new children is for those between 12months (and walking) and three years of age. It is understood that any child will benefit, regardless of age at enrollment.

Enrollment Procedures

After initial contact is made:

1. The parents make an appointment to view the facility and may view a Montessori video. The Montessori philosophy is described and questions are answered.
2. The second meeting is to complete the registration and to review the Parent Handbook.
3. So that your child can see the school before beginning, a third appointment will be made for you and your child to spend 20 minutes while there are children present after 4 P.M...

New children have a probationary period of two to four weeks to ensure the child's assimilation into the Montessori program. Should your child not thrive in the Montessori environment, you will be asked to consider a different setting.

Facility Hours

We are a Full Day Center open Monday through Friday, from 6:30 A.M. to 6 P.M. Some variations may apply, so please check on opening times at your particular center.

The three hour morning group meets 9-12 and the afternoon group meets from 1-4.

The center closes at 6 P.M. There is a charge for late pick-up that goes directly to the closing teacher. We are sure you understand that our staff members have families and commitments, and plan their activities according to their work hours. Please bear this in mind when you arrange your schedule. Thank you.

The school is closed on the following legal holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Years Day, Memorial Day, and the Fourth of July.

Arrivals, Departures, Traffic Patterns

All parents/Guardians are required by law to sign their children in and sign them out. Please walk your child to his/her classroom, where the teacher will meet and greet you. Please put the time of arrival and time of departure, along with your signature. You will be provided with a code that will open the front entrance, this is changed periodically and you will be notified each time. PLEASE DO NOT give this code to anyone other than who regularly picks up your child. There is a doorbell for all other visitors and occasional people that may pick up your child. Remember to always have your ID ready and make sure anyone you authorize to pick up your child is aware that they will need their ID as well. . In the event you need to call to let us know that someone new is picking up your child, you will need to give your state issued ID # to the teacher over the phone. We will need a copy of your ID or the number to have in your child's file. Your child will not leave without a written note or your id with a call in from here on out.

First Day of School

Starting school in a new environment can be fun and exciting to some children, but unsettling to others. Prepare your child so that she/he is aware that you will be leaving, and that you will be back to pick him/her up. When arriving, please say good-bye and leave as quickly as possible. It is a good idea to have your child get out of the car and walk to the school, rather than being carried. An unhappy child will settle down quickly after the parents have left.

If you did not bring the following items when you came with your child to see the school prior to beginning, please bring them the first day:

1. A paper bag with a complete change of clothes.
2. Your child's lunch (if her/she stays for lunch).
3. Any paperwork that needs to be turned in.

Snacks

Snacks consist of nutritional foods with a minimum of artificial coloring or flavoring. Foods provided by the school or donated by parents are store bought. If you would like to help us keep tuition rates down and donate snacks we would appreciate it.

Children usually serve themselves snack during the morning and afternoon. Once in a while it will be served as a group snack and always as group snack for Full Day children late in the day.

Toddlers

Please label your child's bottle and send it with pre measured formula. Send in enough for the entire day. If you use bottled water you may label it and send it in as well. Snacks will be provided as mentioned above and you will send in a lunch as stated below.

Lunches

Only children staying for the full-day program will bring lunch boxes. In general, the quantity of food eaten by a preschool child is relatively small, therefore what is eaten should be something you know your child enjoys, and is also nutritious. Please do not try out new foods at this time. Please refer to your "Lunch Suggestions" handout. Small portions of food are served at a time since children eat better if they are not overwhelmed by the amount of food in front of them. Lunch boxes are refrigerated. We are encouraging good eating habits and pleasant table manners. We do not serve food with high sugar or artificial flavoring/coloring. If you forget, it will be sent back home with a reminder and your child will receive something different to replace that food item.

Napping

Nap time is from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. for full-day children. We provide rest mats with individual mat sheets for the nappers. Please bring a small blanket for your child. If a non-napper falls asleep, it is required by the state that he/she not be wakened. All of the children have a quiet time after lunch when a story is read or a "G"-rated video or DVD is shown. Parents are welcome to view our video library at any time.

Toddlers may have their bottles for the first 30 days at nap time and must be sitting up. Children under the age of two will need a signed note from you giving permission for your child to sleep on the mats and not in a crib.

Written Notes

Please write a note concerning special instructions on a daily basis, rather than telling the greeting teacher. It is too easy to be distracted and forget to get the information to the rest of the staff if it is not written down.

Personal Belongings

Children will all have a cubby to keep their "work" in. Please be respectful of this space and let your child choose what she/he wants to bring home. Some work is an ongoing project and may take more than one day to complete.

We cannot be responsible for lost items, so please do not allow your child to bring money or other valuable items to school. If they do bring such items for show and tell, please make sure they are in a labeled bag.

Show and Tell

We welcome items of educational interest to be shared at group time. Such items would be books, newspaper photos, seasonal items such as leaves, etc. Show and Tell is every day. We are asking that toys and jewelry be left at home. If your child has something to share, please label the item or its container.

Parent Visiting

We encourage our families to come and visit and see the exciting happenings of the day. October and April are wonderful times to come in, since the children are familiar with the daily routine by October and by coming again in the spring, you are able to see the progress that has taken place. Of course, our Open Door policy applies anytime, and you are welcome. All parents are to sign our guest book which is located right inside the front door.

All Other Visitors

All other "non-parent" visitors will be asked for their I.D. and asked to sign our visitor book. Name, address, phone number and reason for the visit must be documented.

Changes at Home

We must be informed of any changes in telephone numbers during the year. In case of emergency, these numbers are crucial. Please inform us of any other changes, such as absence of a family member, etc.

Communication

Parent/Child Parent/School

Even though we encourage parents to be very selective in what TV and video games are viewed by the children, we know some children are allowed to watch what others would not be watching. Children are impressionable, and can be influenced by what they see, as well as what they might experience. Because of this, it is important for you to talk with your child, and make sure he/she understands that, under no circumstances, should they allow anyone other than parents or teachers (only changing pull-ups or soiled clothes) to touch a private part of their body, nor should they touch someone else. We tell children at school that private parts of their body are areas covered by a swimming suit.

Without causing your child to be concerned that this might happen, you need to let him/her know they can always tell you or a teacher if it does happen to them, or they see it happen to a friend. Children can be naturally curious about their bodies, and this is normal. Please do not overreact, but keep us informed of any unusual interest, and we will do the same. We cannot be solely responsible for your child, in this regard. We do everything we can to ensure that your child is safe, happy and innocent, and we rely on your cooperation.

Supervision of Children

It is understood that all children are to be fully supervised by staff. It is the policy of the school to be constantly moving and surveying the

playground at all times during outside time. The staff is constantly counting the children. This is another reason it is imperative that you sign your child out. The staff does not stand and visit without each other, or with parents, because when this happens, the children are NOT supervised.

Birthdays

We celebrate birthdays and holidays at the school with treats provided by the school. A favorite book for our bookshelf may be given to the school in your child's honor. You may also fill out and send in your child's "Life Story" to be read during his/her birthday celebration. Please ask for your copy, if you would like to do it. This helps the child to begin to understand the passage of time in a way that is meaningful to him. Please do NOT send invitations or Thank You notes to be given out at school.

Vacations

Please note the days the school is closed as designated on the school calendar. Vacation policy is stated on the registration form. We try to stay in line with the public schools for the "3 Hour And Half Day" children, but reserve the right to go outside the guidelines if the schedule of our center is better served by alternate dates.

School Closures

School closures will be announced on Channel 4, Denver television and a message will be left on the school phone. We usually follow District 6 closures but be sure to check with us as it may be different than them. **Snow days are not subtracted from the tuition.** Should the school need to close early, parents or others to be notified would be contacted to come for their child.

Absences

We appreciate you calling the school if your child is ill, or will be on vacation.

Paper Work

If your child does not have papers, other than artwork, etc., please do not think he/she is doing nothing at all. The children are learning through the use of the "hands on" materials. "Every day a child should take home love in his heart, knowledge in his head, but not necessarily something in his hand."

Field Trips

Exploration in the community and in nature is designed to lead the children into further activities with the materials in the classroom, just as the classroom activities are designed to lead them into further interaction in the world around them. We will let you know when we are going on a field trip, and perhaps request your child's car seat. Parents may sign up to drive a group of children if we need additional drivers. All children under 3 must ride with their own parents. In the event that everyone at the center will be gone, a note will be posted stating where we are, and when we will return. A permission slip will need to be signed prior to any child leaving the premises.

Riding in Vehicles

Children will always be fastened in a car seat or approved shoulder strap harness (for those 4 yrs. and older). Only children 4 and older will ride in the front seat of a vehicle without passenger air bags. Appropriate behavior is expected and a child will be returned to the school, if necessary, in order for the driver to concentrate on driving. Transportation forms with emergency contacts are taken for each child whenever they leave the school should they be needed.

Child Abuse

Anyone suspecting child abuse must report or cause a report to be made of this suspicion to the local department of social or human services.

Weld County Social Services number is: 970-352-1551

Health

No child will be permitted to attend school with any of the following: an elevated temperature, a cold where he/she cannot stop sneezing or coughing, requiring constant hand washing, if there has been vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours or symptoms of "pink eye" including redness and discharge of the eye. If a child does not appear well, he or she will be isolated from the other children until someone can come for them.

Medication

In accordance with state regulations, we are dispensing medication at the school only with a signed form from your child's doctor. This includes over the counter medications, cough drops, vitamins, etc. There is a sign in sheet for your child's file that must be filled out each time you bring in one of the above. Medications need to be taken home each day. They will be stored in locked storage containers, and will be administered only by staff that has had the Medication Administration Training.

Injuries

Serious accidents or injuries are reported to parents at the time of the incident. Anything requiring immediate attention would mean possibly calling for medical assistance. Minor incidents are reported at the end of the child's day. Documentation would be made by each person involved.

Toileting

If a child isn't toilet trained, he/she will be helped in the restroom. Wipes will be used before a new pull-up/diaper is used. Please be sure your child's clothing can be easily pulled up and down by your child.

We have a diapering chart to check the children and make sure they are dry. When your child seems ready to toilet train we will sit down and have a conference to make sure we are working together.

Fire Procedure

In case of fire, children would exit the building with teachers and help would be called after all children are out.

Tornado Procedure

In case of a "Tornado Watch" the children would be taken to the designated area for each center. In case of an actual tornado, the children would put their hands behind their heads and tuck their heads in their laps.

Lockdown Procedure

We are on the list to be notified by the Greeley Police Department for any threats that would warrant a lockdown. Should this occur, you will receive notification in the way you indicated on the general form (text, call or email). All children would be moved to areas away from the windows.

Missing Child

In the case of a missing child, parents, police and Social Services would be notified.

Discipline

The most important rule for a teacher and parent to remember in the area of discipline is that the adult must control the children who are unable to control themselves, yet give them the opportunity to develop the self-discipline so desperately needed. The general limitations of freedom require respect for others and the environment. Steps for discipline are as follows:

1. We state the limit on the eye level of the child.
2. If the same limit is broken again within 5 or 10 minutes a sand timer is used to redirect the child for three year olds and older. The toddlers will be redirected according to their age.
3. If the same thing is still happening, the child gives up his/her freedom and the teacher chooses work for the child.

Anything more would constitute setting up a conference with the parents to discuss positive options.

Progress Reports

Because the teachers need to concentrate on the children and we do not discuss their progress in front of them, daily reports (written or oral) are not given.

School Dress Code

Children work and play actively. It is important to comply with the following standards:

1. Children should feel that they can participate in all activities without concern if their clothes should become soiled.
2. Children should always like what they are wearing.

3. Children should be dressed according to the weather. On some days, it would be wise to wear a warm coat and bring a light jacket or sweater. We go outside every day if the temperature is 32 F and dry, or under 100 F. On snowy days, have your child wear snow boots to school, even if they do not walk through snow to get into the car. They will walk in the snow to come into school. Please be sure to send in shoes so they have something dry to put on after removing their boots.
4. Children should wear clothing they can manage themselves. Elastic waist pants and slip-on shoes are best for younger children, and essential for those not yet toilet trained.
5. Children should wear rubber-soled shoes, such as tennis shoes which permit them to move quietly in the classroom. No sandals or cowboy boots. We are concerned with safety as well as a calm, quiet classroom.
6. We do not feel that the clothing, etc. of super heroes or similar cartoon characters are appropriate, because we are a school that emphasizes peaceful and friendly attitudes.
7. Children are not to wear jewelry or make-up at school.
8. Shorts, or similar garments, must be worn under dresses to eliminate underwear being exposed.
9. All out clothing should be marked with your child's name.

Remember to ask yourself the question, "Can my child learn independence from the clothing he or she is wearing?"

Complaints

This School is licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Child Care. If you have any concerns about our school, you may contact the Department at 1575 Sherman St., 1st floor, Denver, CO 80302-1714. Their phone number is 1-800-799-5876.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are held twice a year, once in November and again in April. We are available for additional times if there is a need, either by the parents or by the staff.

Closing time

If a child has not been picked up by closing time, and parents cannot be reached, an emergency contact person will be called. If someone does not come in 45 minutes Social Services will be called to come for the child.

Conclusion

We hope this booklet has answered your questions. We look forward to working with you and your child! If you have further questions feel free to call Andrea Roe: 970-215-4140.

