



ALEXANDER STREET MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Welcome to Alexander Street Montessori

Alexander Street Montessori was founded to provide an outstanding learning environment for young children. Since 1982, Alexander Street Montessori has offered unique opportunities for children to develop independence, self-confidence and social discipline while following their natural inclination for joyful learning. The school operates as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Alexander Street Montessori does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion or ethnic origin in the admission of students and hiring of staff.

PHILOSOPHY

The basic idea in the Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom: a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. The world of the child, say Montessori educators, is full of sights and sounds which at first appear chaotic. From this chaos, children must gradually create order, learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail their senses, and, slowly but surely, gain mastery of themselves and their environment.

Dr. Montessori developed what she called the "Prepared Environment," which already possesses a certain order and allows children to learn at their own speed, according to their own capacities and in a non-competitive atmosphere. "Never let children risk failure until they have a reasonable chance of success." The years between three and six are the years in which children learn the rules of human behavior most easily. These years can be constructively devoted to "civilizing" children, freeing them through the acquisition of good manners and habits, to take their places in their culture.

Dr. Montessori has recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, and offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns, who is motivated through work itself (not solely by the teacher's personality) to persist in a given task. If Montessori children are free to learn, it is because they have acquired an "inner discipline" from their exposure to both physical and mental order. This is the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy. Social adjustment, though a necessary condition for learning in a schoolroom, is not the purpose of education. Patterns of concentration, "stick-to-itiveness" and thoroughness, established in early childhood, produce a confident, competent learner in later years. Montessori teaches children to observe, to think, to judge. It introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which intellectual and social discipline go hand-in-hand.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the Alexander Street Montessori School is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help children develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend the School are:

1. To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
2. To develop a sense of high self-esteem.
3. To build habits of concentration for lifelong study skills.
4. To develop and foster an abiding curiosity.
5. To develop habits of initiative and persistence.
6. To foster inner discipline and a sense of order.
7. To develop sensory-motor skills in order to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge.
8. To develop and practice social courtesy and skill.

CURRICULUM

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. He or she must do it by him or herself or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years he or she spends in the classroom because that person is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt, therefore, that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

In the Montessori classroom, this objective is approached two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his or her own choice rather than by being forced; and second, by helping the child perfect his or her natural tools for learning, so that the child's abilities will be maximized for future learning situations. The Montessori materials have this dual, long-range purpose in addition to their immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child.

THE MONTESSORI SEQUENCE

The Montessori classroom is a three-year cycle of progressively harder work which allows children to grow at their own pace. This independently motivated learning fosters a strong sense of joy and individual accomplishment as children integrate their purpose and place in their family, school, and world.

THE MONTESSORI SEQUENCE, CONT.

- The 3-year old will work primarily to define and refine a sense of self. Working through a wide variety of hands-on, sensorial, and often whole-body oriented activities, the 3-year old develops and refines the skills needed for observation and judgment. The activities of rhythm, finger plays, poems, singing, etc are beginning work for language development which increases the attention span and powers of concentration. At this age, most interaction occurs in parallel play as a child develops social skills such as sharing, waiting, asking, etc. All work and activities are leading to stronger capabilities and deepening the sense of independence/ achievement, as experiences of real and purposeful work develops.
- The returning 4-year old continues to build on the skills of concentration, observation, and judgment. Now the child will explore the patterns of the natural world and solve geometric puzzles. Increased skills in language acquisition center on the use of metal insets, tracing shapes to strengthen the hand's pencil grip and accustom the child to making turns and curves in smaller increments. The 4-year old is most interested in naming things (the more exact and larger the word the better!), labeling familiar items, and building phonetic words. Having had the opportunities to develop a sense of sequential thinking earlier, the child is now ready to explore the basis of the numeral system. Using a hands-on, progressively more complex sequence of materials, the child plays with numbers and quantities from 1 to 1000 and explores concepts of zero and set building. Socially, the interaction shifts from parallel play to interactive play where a child will most often engage another one or two friends in work.
- The 5-year old, in completing the three-year cycle, has many opportunities to take on a leadership role in the classroom. When showing a younger child a material, the 5-year old further tests and refines his/her own understanding of that work. The kindergarten child is taking steps toward more abstract thought and is encouraged to create new ideas, and games. This child seeks deeper technical definitions (a hexagon has 6 sides) and will often dictate stories of great complexity. This is a time of imaginative spelling which is encouraged through journal keeping (a journal is given only to 5-year olds) where the building of sentences is explored. The third year child had the skills needed to work throughout the operational functions (+ - x /) in a combined hands-on and, yet increasingly symbolic and representational manner. The 5-year old is intently engaged in broadening his/ her awareness of the social structures of family, school, friends, and community. Map work and cultural studies offer the child an expanded sense of the world and lays the foundation for a deeper experience of his or her place as a global citizen.

THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

- **Practical Life**
Through using small-scaled materials in pouring, folding, sweeping, sorting, and other "everyday exercises", the child develops small and large muscle coordination. A full cycle of completed work creates a sense of real purpose and deepening concentration, leading to an increased sense of accomplishment and independence.
- **Sensorial**
These exercises refine the senses and deepen the powers of observation needed to make decisions. Color, size, shape, sound, weight, touch, taste, and smell are all explored. The child gains an increased sense of mastery over his or her body and well-being.
- **A Cultural Area**
These are materials to explore the world and the universe: art, music, drama, ritual, nature, science, geography, peoples, etc. As children acquire an understanding of how the world operates, they adapt to their own place and time and begin to gain a working knowledge of themselves. Through the cultural activities, children develop a sense for the complexities, struggles and triumphs throughout all of life, and awaken to realize their essential part in the whole.
- **Math and Language**
These are the academic skills children have the opportunity to develop in a Montessori environment. While all children are exposed to the materials, each child's individual interests and growth are considered and fully respected.

In Math, a child is initially presented with concrete materials which help build a strong foundation for later conceptual abstraction. The idea of zero is introduced and extensive counting of items leads to combining numbers in sets for adding and subtracting.

Language activities include extensive preparation for and development of reading and writing. The Montessori approach uses tactile, auditory, and verbal exercises which gradually incorporate a phonetic system for beginning reading and writing. Language development covers a wide range of skills, the most important goal being to foster a predisposition for reading through joyful experiences with a variety of language activities.

PROGRAMS

- **Traditional**
Our traditional program is in session mid-August through late May for ages 2 to 6 years. All day and Morning class offers classroom, outdoor, and off-premises activities.
- **Summer Discovery**
The Summer Discovery program is in session June through July for ages 2 to 6 years. All day and Morning class offers explorations in arts and nature activities followed by recreational swimming. All children enrolled in Summer Discovery participate in Sea Otters learn to swim instruction.
- **Sea Otters**
The Sea Otters program is in session June through July for children ages 2 through 6 years. Small group instruction in our heated pool offers children experience in water adjustment to stroke development.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

- **Admission**
Admission to the school is based on space availability and determination of child's readiness by Head of School and parents. Minimum entrance requirements for children are age of 2 years, toilet trained and ambulatory. We do not administer entrance tests. Children who have been identified with special needs may be admitted upon consultation and interview with Head of School.

Admission priority is given to continuing students, their siblings, children under the age of 4 years, and transfers from Montessori schools.

The general admission procedure is:

1. Parents observe class and /or visit with Head of School.
2. Completion of tuition agreement and of non-refundable registration fee.
3. Completion of state forms.
4. Child's introductory visit.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES, CONT.

➤ Tuition

Tuitions are an annual fee. A tuition deposit, equal to 10% of annual tuition, is due by 1 June or at time of enrollment, if after. Tuition deposit is refundable to 30 days with written notice of withdrawal. Tuition balance is payable in one, two, or monthly payments. The fact that the tuition balance is payable by installments does not constitute a fractional agreement. The school has countless expenses of a continuing nature such as insurance, maintenance and salaries. A child's tuition is calculated as a share in this budget. There are no tuition deductions for absence. A family discount of 10% for concurrent second child enrollment is offered.

Prompt payment of tuitions is expected. Payments must be received by the payment deadline. Payments received after the payment due date are assessed a late payment fee.

➤ Withdrawal and Dismissal

Withdrawal requires a 30 day advance written notice of reason of withdrawal or one month tuition payment. Dismissal of a student for reason of that individual's welfare or the welfare of the group automatically terminates the tuition agreement.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Your promptness at arrival and departures is greatly appreciated, both by the staff and your child. Arriving late to class is a hindrance to the positive functioning of your child's work and the work of others in the class. When you arrive on time, a staff member will greet your child in the entrance hall. We ask you to sign-in and offer a short farewell. Your child is expected to store his or her own personal gear. This is important for their sense of responsibility and independence. If it happens that your child arrives after class has begun, instruct your child to store his or her gear quietly and go directly to the directress for greeting. Since our entry is part of the classroom, late arrivals have the potential of causing disruption of ongoing activities, concentration and individual lessons.

At departure, please make sure a staff member acknowledges your child's departure and sign-out. Your child will not be released to anyone unknown to us or not listed on your information list.

Please be sure to pick up your children promptly at class dismissal time. For those families whose children participate in our All Day program please keep in mind that the school closes promptly at 5:30 p.m. Late pick-ups will be assessed a late fee.

➤ Driveway

Enter the driveway on the west end, pull your car as far forward into the driveway as possible, thereby keeping space available for more arrivals. Depart from the east end onto Alexander. If you are staying for a period of time, park in the space provided along the front or along the west or east sides. When transporting your child do NOT park along the street.

➤ Field Trips

We feel that after the child has gained control in the classroom, it is then time to explore our community outside the school. Our wish is to deepen and broaden their understanding of our social and natural culture by visiting other places.

Transportation will be provided by hired bus. Most field trips will be announced on the bulletin board, but, occasionally, we will undertake impromptu excursions. Our field trips are scheduled on regular school days.

Parents are asked to send appropriate fees to cover transportation costs and tickets.

CLOTHING

Dress your children in clothing that is suitable for their comfortable movement and is *easily manipulated by them*. Few young children can manage overalls, tight-fitting zip and button pants, or belts successfully on their own. Please keep your child's independence in mind when selecting clothing. Help children to do for themselves. Footwear should be selected very carefully for the same reasons. We recommend rubber soled shoes with lace or strap closures. We do not allow boots, "jellies", thongs, "party" shoes, and open-toed shoes at school. *It is requested that you mark your child's name on all removable articles of clothing such as coats, sweaters, hats, mittens, etc.* During colder weather, it is suggested that a layered outfit of sweaters, vests, etc., will provide your child the freedom of dressing to daily weather fluctuations. Keep in mind that we attend play yard every day when rain is not falling. Umbrellas are *not* to be stored at school.

At the beginning of the school year and again as seasons change, please provide a complete change of clothing for your child to be stored at school. There are numerous opportunities for your child to become wet or soiled at school, and a change to dry clothing is always a comfort.

SNACKS

Morning and afternoon snacks are provided for your child. The menu varies; it includes such items as whole grain crackers and breads, cheeses, popcorn, fruits, and vegetables.

LUNCH

Children bring lunch from home. In selecting a lunch kit and accessories, *be sure* your child can manipulate opening and closing items by themselves. We recommend a chilling container or insulated kit to help keep foods fresh. We regret the inability to heat foods. Please provide a napkin and any utensils needed, as well as a cloth dinner napkin.

We feel *very strongly* about good food selections. Pack a variety of *nutritious* foods. We have observed that the young child enjoys "finger foods". Highly processed and sugared foods offer no value to developing bodies. Do not send soft drinks, candies, gum, sweets, chips, pudding, fruit roll-ups, handi- snacks, etc. The food your child does not consume at school will generally be repacked and taken home. Our desire is to promote dining as a pleasant time that also encourages a positive attitude toward a healthy diet.

NON-COMMERCIAL POLICY

In the interest of nurturing an environment free of envy and distracton, children's attire, accessories, and food must NOT include television, movie, and sports team design graphics.

MEDICATIONS

We do not administer medications to children.

ILLNESS AND ACCIDENT

Please do not send an ill child to school. Fever and contagious illnesses provide an unfair environment to others who are healthy. If your child has been ill, wait until the child is free of fever for 24 hours and well rested before returning to school. It is unacceptable to administer fever reducing and pain relieving medications to your child before bringing him to school. Do not ask that your child be excused from outdoor activity. if your child is not well enough to go outdoors, it is best that you keep your child home.

Minor injuries will be treated with standard first aid. Our staff is trained in first aid and CPR. We will telephone you immediately to confer on more serious injuries. For injuries or illnesses that we are unable to attend, we will follow your instructions on the emergency form. If your child becomes ill at school, you will be called to immediately make other arrangements for care.

SWIMMING

Swimming is an activity very beneficial to the health, confidence and recreation of a child. During the warm weather months, pool recreation takes place at the normally allotted play yard times. Our objective is water enjoyment and safety. The directress who supervises pool activities is certified as a Water Safety Instructor by the American Red Cross. This training included an extensive lifesaving practicum and emergency procedures. Children do not need full swimming skills to participate.

As swim season approaches, you will be notified to bring a tank suit and towel for your child. This gear will remain at school and be laundered weekly.

SHOW AND TELL

Show and Tell is welcome any school day. Children are encouraged to bring natural and cultural items. We think it wonderful to share things which are important to the child.

TOYS and similar items *must* be left at home. Accessories such as watches, jewelry, and headbands tend to be an attractive nuisance and distract from the work at hand; these should not be a part of your child's school outfit.

Books are a popular item for sharing and expand our awareness of what is available and loved. Bring only books that would be considered "good literature"; commercial books are unwelcome.

COMMUNICATIONS

Daily or periodic communications between families and staff are very important to us. We do not have the luxury of a school secretary or full-time administrator, and the staff you see every day is the teaching staff. Obviously, since we are usually directly involved in supervising your children when you see us, our visiting time with parents is limited. Following are suggestions for you to follow when you need to communicate.

- **Write a Note**
Instructions or information about changes in your child's day, such as transportation, schedule or your whereabouts, should be provided to the staff in written form. If you would like the directress to call you after class, this would be a good reason for a note; another would be to request a conference.
- **Telephone**
To insure uninterrupted supervision of your children and maintenance of a pristine classroom environment we allow our answering machine to answer many telephone calls throughout the day. Please leave your message and return number. We check messages as immediately as possible and respond in a timely way to urgent messages.

An additional benefit is that our answering machine is on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your convenience to contact the Directress.
- **Parent Bulletin Board**
Located upon entry of red door. Any current information is posted here. Check for health notices, field trips, current events, etc.

CELEBRATIONS

- **Birthdays**
Children's birthdays are cause for celebration and enjoyed by all. A child celebrating a birthday is invited to bring snack to share with their schoolmates. This snack should be of a simple, nutritious nature (no sweets, please). Please also provide approximately 6 snap-shots that show your child "growing up".

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Observations are an important part of your relationship with the school. Not only does your observation increase your understanding, but your feedback to the directress offers additional insight into the workings of the classroom. The classroom environment is carefully protected from interruption. This is the children's place, and we must respect their right to work without intrusion, so that they can achieve and maintain the concentration so necessary for their learning. In order that the classroom does not have too many visitors at one time, please arrange for an appointment. It is best if you can arrange to visit for at least one hour during the work period.

We recommend the conference season as a good time to plan your observation. If you happen to observe in the early period of the school year, you might also wish to observe again in the Spring to witness the transformation into a normalized classroom.

We allow observations in our classroom to persons not directly related to our students. These visitors would include evaluators from state agencies or Montessori associations, education professionals, students and parents of prospective students.

CONFERENCES

Parent conferences are scheduled twice per year, once in the Fall and again in the Spring. An appointment schedule is posted on the parent bulletin board located just inside the front entry for you to sign in. This is an invaluable time of sharing, both for the school staff and family. We are delighted to have both parents or guardians who live with the child attend.