

## EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

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Our Early Childhood community offers multi-aged grouping for ages 2 ½ ~ 6 years. The three year mixed age grouping gives children the unique opportunity to succeed in a miniature community, where mutual respect, caring, sharing and self reliance can flourish. Older children are mentors and roll models for the younger children. Through teaching and mentoring the younger children, their knowledge is reinforced.

Our Early Childhood guides (teachers) prepare the classrooms to support a child's natural curiosity; encourage creativity and aid in cooperative learning. Children learn individually and in small groups. The child is free to choose work that has been introduced to him/her from the different areas of the classroom. Each classroom consists of the following areas: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, Culture, Science, Art and Music. Every child has the freedom to observe, explore and interact with the inviting and colorful materials in the environment, thus acquiring knowledge through meaningful and satisfying work.

Our work continues into the outdoor classroom, where we will cultivate our organic school garden and learn about beneficial bugs and care of wildlife. What the children grow, they will harvest, clean, prepare and eat – returning scraps to the garden. The outside cycle is the same as inside – we choose work, determine the steps or actions required, lay out what we need, do our work then restore or return it for the next person to use. Children love the order, logic and intrinsic fairness in doing work this way.

Our Montessori School offers a unique cycle of learning designed to take advantage of the child's sensitive years between birth and 6 years, when they can absorb information from an enriched environment.

*“Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment.*

*Maria Montessori*

## EARLY CHILDHOOD OVERVIEW

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The underlying foundation of our school is respect:

1. *I respect myself*: true learning is respect.
2. *I respect my friends*: we are social beings and our actions affect others.
3. *I respect my environment*: we are the caretakers of our community and its resources.

It is imperative for a child's learning and for the smooth functioning of our school community that each child learn the "cycle of activity":

1. I choose my work.
2. I complete it properly.
3. I put it away, ready for the next person.

We are working on *normalization* (a child in harmony and self and environment). This is accomplished as a child learns to Work and enjoys working. Work (the process, not the product) is what brings fulfillment of the FIVE MAIN GOALS:

1. *Concentration*: The ability to observe and comprehend, the ability to remain focused on a task for ever increasing amounts of time.
2. *Independence*: in choices, in decision-making, in care of person and environment, and in the responsibility for learning.
3. *Control and Coordination*: of body, mind and heart.
4. Purposeful Activity: learning to engage in purposeful activity, as opposed to chaotic or nervous activity.
5. *Joyful Accomplishment*: to experience the feeling of, and to quest for joyful accomplishment (the positive experience is what propels a child to accept himself and desire further knowledge).

With these goals in mind, each child is guided in development at FIVE LEVELS:

1. *Physical*: potential learning problems can first be spotted in a young child's ability to control movements.
2. *Emotional*: young children need patience and guidance to learn to control and express their feelings.
3. *Intellectual*: young children are collectors of knowledge (they absorb it from their environment).
4. *Mental*: to know, to experience, to use all known information for experiments and problem-solving.
5. *Spiritual*: develops strength of character, revelation of true personality, and desire to be of service to others.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

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The Early Childhood Community is based on the three-year-cycle, with the third year serving as the culmination of the preparatory work done during the first two years. Every child is unique in their learning style. Our objective is to provide a prepared environment which is calm and peaceful, in which the work is enticing and the natural sequence of learning can unfold for each child.

The areas of learning include Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, Physical and Life Science, Culture and Art.

### **Practical Life Skills**

Exercises in pouring, hand washing, polishing, table setting and other practical life areas develop skills in self care and care of the environment. These exercises of practical life build and refine the child's sense of order, concentration, coordination and independence which prepares the child for all other areas in our classroom. This area is also a bridge between home and school; it is a "preparation for life".

### **Sensorial**

Activities in this area sharpen the five senses and help the child become a trained observer. The sensorial materials develop visual and tactile discrimination of different dimensions, color, shape and form. The most important aspect of this area is the indirect preparation for more advanced skills and concepts in language, math and science.

### **Math**

Math materials are esthetically appealing, precise and simple. This is one of the most desired areas of the classroom. Concrete representations of abstract ideas and symbols help the child understand number concepts and prepare him for future extensions of the work.

### **Language**

The Montessori language curriculum includes all the elements of language, auditory, oral, mechanical, interpretive, and grammar. There is great variety of materials in this area of the classroom. The most classic Montessori materials for learning written language are the sandpaper letters and movable alphabet. Language development is embedded in the entire classroom (rather than an isolated subject) with plenty of opportunity for language in all areas of study.

### **Physical and Life Sciences**

Children learn about our world through observation, experimentation and care of our environment. Young children love nature and are truly intrigued by its mysteries. They are innate explorers, possessing a natural curiosity for the known and the unknown. We offer an abundance of hands on opportunities for children to understand and appreciate science. Activities range from simple science experiments inside like sink & float, magnetism, color mixing, etc. and extend outdoors with observations of life and season cycles in our garden and community.

## **Culture**

The study of Culture and Geography start with the sensorial exploration of directionality, body awareness, weather and the calendar. From there we begin to study our world, starting with the sand paper globe, identifying land and water, then beginning to name continents, oceans and seas. The puzzle maps accentuate mapping skills and exploration of different countries and their cultures. Our Cultural studies encompass the traditions, holidays, music and food from all over the world. Our diverse community of students is always a positive and interesting advantage to our Cultural studies.

## **Art, Music and Movement**

The children are given an opportunity to develop their gross and fine motor skills through creative movement and art. Music is integral to our day, incorporated into much of our cultural work and often as a soothing background to our work period. Art encourages the natural desire to create. Our art program also emphasizes the *process* rather than the *product*, giving children more freedom to be creative. Through exposure to the arts, our children not only use their time in a pleasant way, they create something to share with others.

## **Parents are Essential to a Successful School Experience**

Montessori philosophy believes that education begins at birth. Children from birth to 6 years of age are at the most critical time of their learning and development. We are committed to providing a nurturing and tantalizing environment that will feed each child's natural inquisitiveness. We believe as parents learn and experience Montessori with their child, that a powerful alliance will develop that supports each child in their quest for learning and self-fulfillment.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY NOTES

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### **What not to Bring to School**

- Due to limited storage space, backpacks are not allowed.
- All bed linens/blankets are provided and laundered at school.
- Extra clothing (unless discussed with teacher and deemed necessary) - MHFC has extra clothing available at the school in the event that your child needs to change clothes.

### **Montessori Work Time**

Our day begins at 8:30 and continues through to 2:30. An integral part of your child's day is the uninterrupted block of work time. This is of utmost importance to your child for his academic, personal and social growth. Our daily schedule is designed so that all children are included in this community effort, regardless of their chosen program. It is also a measure of respect to all the students already working that we expect no disruptions once the morning work period has started. Please arrive on time. If you are late, please separate from your child at the front desk and a staff member will walk your child to class.

### **Parent/Teacher Communication**

Parent/teacher conferences will be held twice yearly, during the Fall and Spring sessions.

Daily questions, concerns or updates will be addressed in a timely manner, **outside of the children's work period (8:30-2:30)**. If you would like to talk, drop us a note at the front office and the teacher or other desired staff member will call you at their earliest convenience. If you have an immediate question or concern, please talk with someone at the front desk for help.

### **Your Child's Work**

A majority of the work completed in the classroom can not be sent home because it is a part of our classroom materials on our shelves. This is especially true for younger children who are not able to write and/or read. We will conduct observation opportunities through the school year so that you will have the chance to see your child's work.

Older children who are working on extensions to the classroom materials will take home work that has been completed.

All work will be sent home in your child's Friday folder, please return the folder on Monday.

### **Birthday & Special Events**

The early childhood communities celebrate birthdays the "Montessori Way". The birthday child is the 'center of attention' of his/her class by holding the globe and walking around a candle ("sun") and the months of the year as a story of his/her life is

read. We would like the parents to provide us with this story of your child's life several days before his birthday. Bring pictures of each year of his life if you have them. You may bring a low sugar snack, perhaps from your particular culture to share with the class. We will take pictures for you if you would like to leave your camera.

### **Lunch From Home**

Our meal times are very special and include careful preparation and clean-up. If you elect to bring a lunch from home rather than eat our school's hot lunches, we ask that you please include the following items in your packed lunch to help your child be successful with meal times:

- Cloth Napkin or paper napkin
- Healthy and balanced meal providing:
- A protein, grain, fruit and vegetable
- Lunches that are perishable need to have ice-packs

\*Water is provided at the school\*

### **Snacks**

Teachers will work with the families to bring in fresh produce, snacks and fresh flowers on a weekly rotating basis. Family involvement will help to enrich our children's appreciation for good nutrition.

### **Daily Readers**

Children showing an interest in books will be sent home with a book. Please *encourage* your child to share the book with you but be careful to not *discourage* your child by forcing them to read it. Once finished, your child can exchange the book for another one.

### **Show & Tell**

Show and tell will be every Friday. In our monthly calendars, we will outline several topics that will be covered throughout the month. Your child is always encouraged to bring an item from home that will enhance our lessons. *Toys are not permitted.*

### **Washcloths**

We appreciate your and your child's help with washing our classroom washcloths. Our goal as avid Montessorians is to guide the small child into becoming an independent and self-sufficient adult. In order to achieve this goal, we as adults must incorporate in the child a sense of responsibility, ownership and team-work...

### **Parent Volunteers/Parent Committees**

Your involvement will always serve to enhance your child's learning enjoyment. We will provide you with a list of ideas for ways that you can contribute to our community. Also, we welcome any thoughts, special talents and cultural events that you would like to share with us.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DAILY SCHEDULE**

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<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>	
6:30	8:00	Breakfast (Gathering Room)
8:30	8:45	Drive Through Student Arrivals
8:30	12:00	Montessori Work Cycle (Including Outdoor Environment)
12:00		Half-day student dismissals
12:00	12:30	Lunch for extended-day and full-day children
12:30	2:30	Rest period for children who nap
12:30	1:00	Lunch clean up
1:00	2:30	Afternoon Montessori Work Cycle
2:30	2:40	Extended Day Drive Through Student Dismissal
2:30	6:00	Home Environment Work Time (Including Outdoor Environment)