

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The basic principle in the Montessori philosophy of education is that every child carries within himself the potential of the adult which he is to become. In order to develop his physical, intellectual, and spiritual powers to the fullest, he must have freedom - a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline.

The world of the child is full of sights and sounds which appear chaotic at first. From this chaos, the child must create order and learn to distinguish the impressions that assail his senses. Slowly he gains mastery over himself and his environment. Dr. Montessori developed what she called a "prepared environment" which possesses a definite order and disposes the child to develop at his own speed according to his own capacities, in a non-competitive atmosphere. "Never let a child risk failure until he has a reasonable chance of success," says Dr. Montessori, understanding the necessity for the acquisition of a basic skill before its use in a learning situation. Providing positive direction, the Montessori directress and the parents realize the importance of allowing the child to develop in his own time.

Individuality

The method by which children are taught in the Montessori school is extremely disciplined. And since the child has learned to work independently in the prepared environment, he is ready to enjoy the presence of other children without necessarily working directly with them. Thus, the Montessori teacher is able to work with each child individually, illustrating the use of the equipment. Because most of the Montessori equipment is designed so that errors are self-evident to the child, adult intervention in the child's work is not necessary and is even undesirable once the use of the equipment has been demonstrated.

Self-Motivation

Dr. Montessori recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children naturally move themselves toward learning. Adults often intervene, with the best intentions, and place obstacles to learning in the child's path. To this effect, Dr. Montessori stated that any unnecessary help given to the child hinders him in his growth. The teacher prepares the environment, observes and directs the activity, functions as an authority and protector to the children and environment, and offers the work according to the readiness and need of each child.

If the Montessori child is free to learn, it is because he has acquired, from experience with both mental and physical order, the "inner discipline" which frees him. He becomes aware not only of his freedom but also of his corresponding responsibility to himself and to others. This is the aim of Montessori to develop "the whole child." Intellectual, physical, and social development are of equal value within the prepared environment. The teacher strives to encourage and guide the child to help him realize the balanced, happy, vital personality that will perpetuate into his life as an adult.

Recommended Reading

The Absorbent Mind by Maria Montessori

Based on her lectures, translated from the Italian. The appreciation of nuance, the spirit, and the wisdom of this great observer shine through. Sometimes the language and concerns seem dated, but the essence is what drives dedicated Montessorians. Theory is illustrated with anecdotes and analogies.

Montessori: A Modern Approach by Paula Polk Lillard

An overview of Montessori theory and practice which should help parents understand what is happening in the classroom. Excerpts from Dr. Montessori's own writing are put in a frame which is easier for modern parents to read.

What Do You Really Want for Your Children? by Dr. Wayne W. Dyer

A thoughtful analysis of the really important things that we want for our children. Will help you handle some of the minor hurdles of parenting as you focus on major goals.

How to Raise a Brighter Child by Joan Beck

Very readable, interesting, and refreshing perspective on children and how to nurture mental development. The chapter on Montessori is well done. Includes a good list of gift ideas.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and How to Listen So Kids Will Talk by Faber and Mazlish

Teaches step-by-step skills that many of us have lost in our video culture. Useful in adult life as well as gaining perspective on how our children relate to us.

Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv

Links the absence of nature to some of today's most disturbing trends, rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression. Support his theses with research which indicates that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development.

TUITION FEES AND PAYMENT

Tuition is based on the annual cost for each child. The total cost includes meals, accident insurance, and supplies. All payments are due in advance and must be up-to-date before the child will be allowed to attend the school. If your tuition is received later than 10 a.m. on the first business day of the month, there is a late charge. If you have made arrangements to pay mid-month, the same late charge is applied on the 15th or first business day after. Because of the time and cost involved, \$30 may be charged when a check is returned. No tuition allowances are made for children's absences. If your child will be out of the school for a full month, a temporary leave can be granted. Please contact the office to make arrangements for this adjustment.

Withdrawal

A full month's written notice is required to withdraw from the school. When written notice is received, we apply your tuition deposit to your child's next or last month's tuition regardless of attendance. (Ex. If you pay on the 1st of the month and give notice on the 5th of the month your child's last day is the 5th of the next month, your tuition deposit gets applied for the next month's tuition, regardless of attendance past the 5th.) Tuition deposit must be used, it is non-refundable.

Dismissal

A child may be dismissed by the school without prior notice if, in the sole opinion of the school, it is in the best interests of the child or of the school to do so. When a child is dismissed in this case, all prepaid monies are refunded from the week of dismissal.

WAITING LIST

Enrollment in the school is strictly regulated. First priority is given to siblings of children already enrolled in the school. After that, the school reserves the right to accept children to achieve the optimum age balance of children in the classroom. This is an important requirement for a proper Montessori environment. There is no discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, or disability.

ORIENTATION

At the beginning your child may need help to adjust to a group situation. The visits before your child actually starts school gives your child a special time with his new teacher. You can help dispel fears by talking, in a positive way, about the things the child can anticipate at his school. New friends, fun "work", and good food are all pleasant aspects of his new experience. Your attitude will be your child's clue as to how he should react to school. If tears do occur on the first day or two, they are usually short-lived and they often stop as soon as the parent is out of sight. While it's not easy to leave when a child is crying, a firm, quick "goodbye" often works miracles. Avoid lingering kisses and comments like, "Mommy/Daddy is going to miss you today." Your reappearance at a regular time each day will soon relieve anxieties.

If you are concerned on a particular day, we encourage you to call the school later in the day for a full report.

Dress

Children should be dressed in comfortable play clothes which are washable, roomy enough to allow freedom of movement, and easy for the child to handle. Children out of diapers should have elasticized waistbands rather than overalls and onesies. This helps with your child's sense of independence and self-confidence. Please do not tie

your child's shoes in double knots. The children are taught to tie their own shoes very early. If the laces don't come untied occasionally, the opportunity to tie does not come up. Also, shoe laces should be long enough for the children to tie.

Removable clothing such as jackets and hats should be marked with your child's name. Most children should have one change of clothes left at the school. Infants need at least two changes of clothes, and toddlers frequently need numerous changes. These should be sent to the school in a clearly labeled paper bag. When soiled clothes are sent home, a replacement should be sent back the next day. Also, please be aware of growth spurts and season changes which make your child's spare clothes inappropriate.

Personal Articles

Children are encouraged to bring personal items from home. An item that has a special attachment for the child can ease transition into the school. Favorite toys to share with their friends can be real learning experiences for children. They are especially good for allowing the more reticent child to "perform" before their class. Neither the school nor the staff accepts responsibility for these personal items, so you will want to consider carefully about allowing expensive or valuable items to be brought. Toys that may be considered weapons, such as guns, swords, or knives, will not be allowed. If the child wishes to bring a live animal to show, arrangements should be made with the child's teacher.

From time to time, children become very attached to small pieces of Montessori apparatus. We would appreciate your checking pockets and washing machines occasionally in case a little "treasure" has been brought to your house.

Meal Service

Children, like armies, travel on their stomachs. The school is so committed to excellent nutrition and balanced diets that much of our food is prepared on site. Because meal times are a social learning experience, our staff members join with the children in a pleasant, relaxing atmosphere. To aid in your own meal planning, the menu is prominently displayed at the school in addition to being published weekly in the newsletter. Children are not encouraged to bring food from home, but we are delighted if their parents can find time to join us for a meal.

If you are nursing your baby, we are thrilled to have this experience with your family. We'll make every effort to make your time with us as comfortable as possible.

Discipline

Our school is committed to discipline of children that dignifies and respects their own inner guidance and self-directed purpose for harmony, order, cooperation, and love towards their environment. Adults interact with children to support such self-discipline in children and to assure their compliance and cooperation. We use such positive means as example, clear direction, reasoning, distraction, reflective language, and questioning to achieve desirable behavior. We consider any intentional inflicting of physical pain or threat of such pain as strictly inconsistent with and contrary to our

discipline policy. We consider such actions child abuse, which may also violate protective laws that require us to report to pertinent government agencies. All adults on our premises are required to agree to follow this policy at all times in their interactions with our children. Any adult who violates this policy agrees to accept correction, direction, or other suitable guidance to cooperate in a remedy of the situation. Our staff are also required to be trained in identifying, preventing and reporting suspected abuse. The Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline is 1-800-252-5400.

Manners

Lessons in grace and courtesy are an important part of the life skills curriculum at our school. When you are in the school, you become the child's official supervisor and we hesitate to correct your child in front of you. Therefore, here are a few of our more basic rules so that you can reinforce them on your own.

- o We always speak so softly that a person more than about three feet away cannot hear.
- o We never run in the school.
- o We never walk on a work rug.
- o We put our work away before we leave an area.
- o The children shake hands with their teacher when they are leaving the school. They are not allowed to leave their group until the parent appears.

CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays

Children's birthdays should be very special days. We celebrate the child by having a "birthday circle" in which the child goes around the circle once for each year of his life. We like to talk about special events that happened during each year and perhaps show pictures of the child when he was that old. This information must come from the parent. It can be in the form of a story and maybe snapshots. Pictures will be returned the day we have the "circle".

If you would like to send a special snack for the birthday celebration, this is permissible, but you should coordinate your specific plans with the teacher. Generally, we prefer a low-sugar snack. In fact, we find that a party favor lasts longer and brings more appreciation from the children than a snack. Some parents like to contribute an article to the classroom in the child's name for the celebration. This option continues to be enjoyed by the children for a much longer time. Please discuss your ideas with the teacher.

Holidays

Various holidays are celebrated throughout the year. National as well as ethnic celebrations are scheduled. The children and their parents are encouraged to contribute to these celebrations. Talk with your child's teacher about your plans.

SCHOOL HOURS

The school opens at 6:30 a.m. [Please park and walk into the school with your child. A safe entrance and a happy goodbye are crucial to your child's day. Be sure that your child has been greeted by a staff member and that he is securely in place.](#) Generally a big hug, assurance about the time you will return, and a quick departure are best. Sometimes a child will run after a parent, creating an emotionally trying experience for both the child and the parent.

It is important that children arrive in the mornings before their class starts. Late arrival disrupts the class and also puts the late-arriving child at a disadvantage. Pickup time should be similarly regular. Children are extremely sensitive to their order of leaving, and being left late without their knowing why can be cause for avoidable anxieties. If you are detained from your usual schedule, please call the school so that we can let your child know of your whereabouts. There will come the day when you'll want the same courtesy from your child. If you will be in the school other than your normal routine, please prepare your child and our staff appropriately.

Pickup

Children left after 6:00 p.m. will incur a late pickup charge. The charge is \$10 for each 15 minutes or portion of 15 minutes that the child is left late. This time is by our clock. The late charge slip must be signed by the person authorized to pick up the child.

No child will be released to anyone other than those people listed on the enrollment information forms. Exceptions may be made in writing by the parents, and the people picking up the child should be prepared to show identification. If we are uncomfortable with allowing your child to go with the person who has arrived to get your child, we will call another one of your designated people to come for your child.

Observed Holidays

New Year's Eve and Day	Independence Day
Martin Luther King Day	Labor Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving (Wed., Thu., and Fri.)
Memorial Day	Christmas Eve, Day and Day after

Emergency Closing

At times, weather conditions may necessitate closing the school. When public schools are in session, we follow the closing days of the local independent school district listed in the front of this handbook. If we have to close the school during the day, you or your

emergency contact will be notified by telephone. You can confirm closings by checking our website.

The school has written procedures for dealing with fires or natural disasters that might occur during the school day. If we have to evacuate the school, the children will be taken to the location listed in the front of this handbook. Please make sure you know several alternate routes to that location. Another possible emergency is a shelter-in-place contingency. Each staff member is thoroughly trained in all these procedures, and the children regularly have fire and severe weather drills. If you have questions about any of these procedures, please ask to see our operating procedures for details. A copy of our emergency preparedness plan is included at the back of this parent handbook.

ABSENCES

When a child is to be absent, a quick comment to the staff or a phone call to the school prevents unnecessary concern. If your child is ill with a contagious disease, please let us know so we can alert other parents.

HEALTH POLICIES

The school is a place for healthy children, which we verify in our morning greeting to the child. We ask your cooperation in keeping children home when signs of disease are present. Though this is sometimes inconvenient for parents, this policy reduces the total number of sick children at the school. If your child has a fever of more than 100°, he cannot be in the school. [We have a 24-hour fever-free policy before a child can return to school if your child is sent home ill, unless you provide a doctor's note that the child is not contagious and can return to school.](#) Please do not mask fever with a fever-reducing medication. Although the child may feel better, in fact, he is still ill and needs to rest. If you feel that your child is too ill to participate in the school's activities for the day, including going outdoors in cold weather or water play on warm days, please consider that perhaps the child is too ill to be at the school. Children left out of the general activities begin to feel that there is something wrong with them. If your child develops symptoms of illness while at the school, you will be notified.

We will be glad to help you in administering medication to your child as necessary. Please help us by adhering to the following rules:

1. The medicine log must be filled out, signed and dated for each medicine to be given. Infants and Toddlers have medicine logs in the classroom. Primary medicine log is on the Breakfast Bar in the reception area.
2. Medicine must be in the pharmacy's original container where the label specifies the proper dosage. Non-prescription drugs must be accompanied by a note from the doctor's office detailing the proper dosage and for how long the child is to take the medication. We only administer meds prescribed for 3 or more times a day. (If it is required 3x/day, we will administer one time, if 4x/day we will administer medication only twice.)

3. **Medicine must be given to a member of the staff. It must never be put with the child's belongings.**
4. All medication should be taken home each day. If the child is to continue his medicine the next day, the medicine log must be filled out, signed and dated again.

If your child requires special care for a medical condition, we need a full statement of the condition and the steps needed to accommodate your child. Please also be aware that our school staff are mandatory reporters, which means that if we suspect abuse of any sort, we are legally obligated to report the suspicion to Child Protective Services.

Immunizations

Each child must have all state-required immunizations, a certificate of health form, and vision and hearing tests for children 4 years old or older. A great place to get information about immunization requirements is the Texas Department of Health at www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize. Your child cannot be admitted to the school without proof of the immunizations unless your religious affiliation prohibits immunization. Waiver forms are available at the State of Texas website.

Injuries

While accidents are rare, we follow this procedure:

1. We immediately notify the parents or your emergency contacts. If we can't reach any of these, we contact your family physician.
2. Failing to get instructions from any of these, we see that your child is taken to the nearest hospital.

All children in the school are covered by the school's accident insurance policy. Please notice that this is a secondary policy. This policy protects your child while attending school, while participating in or attending any activity sponsored by the school, and while traveling directly between his residence and the school.

COMMUNICATIONS

Our weekly newsletter has such items as upcoming events, what's happening in the classrooms, and what to bring for this week's show-and-tell. This is our main avenue for keeping you informed about what's going on at the school and about any changes in policies at the school. Much of the newsletter is also on our website at www.greystonehouse.com, and we frequently post pictures www.stamarin.com. The website also has links to general parenting and Montessori sites. You can get more specific child care information and current standards at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services website www.dfps.state.tx.us. If you prefer to call TDPS, their phone number is 1-800-862-5252. and the child abuse hot line is 1-800-252-5400. As a note on their website, you might be interested to know that the school is a gang-free zone, which means that gang activities within 1000 feet of the school carry harsher penalties.

Conferences

There are several types of conferences at the school. The first is your orientation conference that you will have before the child's first day of school. The child may stay with the parent and teacher while they meet, play with the children, and explore the classroom. The teacher will discuss what the child needs for the first day, routines at the school, where things are located, and answer questions. We'll want you to tell us your perception of your child's personality, his learning style, and routines at home. We'll give you an orientation packet with more forms to fill out and more information about the school. In about six weeks, you'll have another conference with the teacher to share how your child is normalizing and what your observations have been about your child as he has made this important transition.

Twice each year thereafter, usually in April and again in October, parents have the opportunity to conference with their child's directress. This is accompanied by a written report of the child's current activities at the school. These conferences are invaluable aids to the teachers, and we feel that this communication between the school and the home is beneficial for the child as well. You will receive notices of the conferences, including time, date, and approximate duration. We make every effort to accommodate your schedule in making these conference times as convenient as possible. Thank you for honoring the teacher's time if canceling or rescheduling is necessary.

When your child is preparing to make a transition into another class, you'll be notified by your child's teacher that this transition is approaching. When the time actually arrives, you'll have the opportunity to meet with the new teacher and discuss new customs and routines of that class. About six weeks after the transition is complete, if you would like, you'll have another opportunity to share how your child is normalizing to the new class, both from your observations at home and from the new teacher's observations.

Appointments

Day-to-day schedules often do not allow time to discuss items that are of concern to you. Please feel free to call the school at any time for an appointment with any staff member. Small matters can sometimes assume alarming proportions if left to grow unattended. As a matter of practice, we make every effort to maintain confidentiality for all our families. Please understand that when your child tells you a certain child has been involved in an altercation, it may or may not have been that child at that time. The best remedy is to talk with us.

Special Events

Several times a year, special events are planned for families and sometimes just for parents of children in the school. Open houses, parties, lectures by community specialists, and staff discussions will be scheduled, as well as other topics you might

suggest. In the summer, the children participate in informal water play activities. These consist of sprinklers, tubs, and hoses, and they are a great delight.

Observations

We encourage you to notice the whole school environment every day as you come and go. With our open classrooms, this is easy to do. If you'll train yourself to observe, you'll find that you'll have a high degree of confidence about what is happening at the school on a daily basis, especially on those non-routine times that you're coming and going. You'll also be aware that every other parent who comes and goes has the same opportunity.

Children are delighted to have their parents visit their working environment. As a general rule, you should not ask to observe your child's class less than six weeks after your child has transitioned into that class. This is the anticipated period for the child to normalize. To schedule an observation period, call the school for your most convenient time. We ask that you limit your observation to about 30 minutes beginning approximately 15 minutes after classes have started.

Disputes

There may be times when we simply need an outsider to be objective. Because we enter into this mutual agreement to resolve disputes, we anticipate gaining the benefits of a speedy, impartial dispute resolution procedure. In order to work toward these objectives, we may choose to use voluntary mediation, but if mediation is not chosen or is unsuccessful, we promise to resolve our disputes through binding arbitration. Either of us may begin mediation or arbitration. Mediation is available to us on a strictly voluntary basis. However, either of us has the right to compel arbitration before a mutually agreeable arbitrator. The arbitrator has exclusive authority to resolve any dispute relating to the interpretation, applicability, enforceability, or formation of the agreement including any claim that part or all of this agreement is void or voidable or any claim that the terms of this agreement have been violated. We both acknowledge that we have carefully considered the policies of the school and that we have entered into this relationship voluntarily. We agree to be bound by the arbitrator's decision, and understand that we waive the right to have a court or jury resolve claims or disputes.