"Serving the Corvallis and Philomath community since 1984"

Philomath Montessori School Handbook

Revised August 2016

Maria Montessori

Dr. Maria Montessori, born in 1870, was the first woman to receive a medical degree in Italy. She worked in the fields of psychiatry, education and anthropology. She never published a theory until she had observed it for many years, with children of all social classes and in many countries.

She believed that each child is born with a unique potential to be revealed, rather than as a "blank slate" waiting to be written upon. Her main contributions to the work of those of us raising and educating children are in these areas:

1) Learning to prepare the best environment for the child, according to the different stages of life.

2) Learning to observe the child living freely in this environment and to continually adapt the environment for the ever-changing child, in order that he may fulfill his greatest potential, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Montessori Education

The Montessori Method is dynamic in that observation and meeting of needs is continual and specific for each child. Dr. Montessori came to the conclusion that education must be an aid to life, a collaboration with nature. Her message is still to "Follow the Child". There are many books written about her amazing discoveries and Montessori teacher training centers and schools exist on all continents today. Her philosophy is not to be restricted to schools, but is valid wherever in the world there are children.

—From Michael Olaf's Essential Montessori

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Our Values

Respect for all • Diversity • Community • Compassion • *and the* • Love of Learning

Our Philosophy

Since our school's inception our philosophy has been and continues to be based on Maria Montessori's innovations and insights. Through many years of research and direct observations, she learned "the secret of childhood" and we are dedicated to using these discoveries to guide our work with children.

The Universal Child and Diversity

Nearly 100 years ago, Dr. Montessori discovered universal patterns of development within the children she studied. We believe that educational excellence requires a diverse community. We welcome all children -- supporting and celebrating differences of gender, race, religion, family structure, socio-economic level, age, sexual orientation, abilities and learning style.

The Primary Years Are the Most Important

From birth to six, children progress through a series of "sensitive periods"-- unique windows of opportunity for learning. During these periods learning is naturally driven and almost effortless. Montessori also recognized that young children learn in a unique way. Their brains learn by unconsciously taking in everything around them.

The Prepared Environment

For Maria Montessori, the classroom was a prepared environment equipped with a rich array of activities that inspired children and sustained their attention and concentration while encouraging independence. Therefore, everything is child-sized and composed with beauty, quality and intention. And most of all, the activities in the classroom are hands-on so that the child can learn not only by doing, but also experience many abstract qualities and concepts in a concrete form.

Freedom of Movement and Choice

Montessori saw freedom as one of the most important factors in allowing children to develop as spontaneous, creative individuals. She saw the role of education as providing environments in which children could explore and delve into activities and subjects at will and at their own pace. She also gave this freedom the framework of meaningful limits to guide the children to self-discipline.

Adult Preparation

Montessori called her teachers Guides because she felt that they sensitively guided, rather than controlled, the children's activities. She asked that they be more observers than teachers and considered that success lay in the ongoing nature of the teachers' own personal development as well as on the observations of individual children. Ultimately she saw their role as not so much to teach the children as to direct the natural energies that they saw emerging.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Philomath Montessori School admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, abilities or other legally protected status to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Philomath Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, abilities or other legally protected status in administration of its educational and admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

The Benefits of a Third Year in Montessori

Very often, after having experienced a very positive first two years with their child in a Montessori primary environment, parents begin to wonder. "Why shouldn't we take advantage of the excellent Kindergarten program offered at our local public school? Our child has learned a lot already in her Montessori preschool.

She's certainly as ready for Kindergarten as the other kids on our block, if not more. Let's save some money and move on." This line of thinking is entirely logical and a very common sentiment. However, it does show some lack of understanding of the myriad benefits of staying in the Montessori program for the full three years.

One disadvantage to making any kind of transfer at this time is the time lost to adjustment. This last year that the child has the power of the Absorbent Mind can never be regained. Instead of furthering her studies in her Montessori class, the child transferring to a new school will spend much of her year getting to know the new routine, expectations, kids and teachers. This really cuts into some very critical learning time. Additionally, the child's previous learning and understanding may not be fully recognized and appreciated by teachers. Typically the five-year-old child is not expected to be familiar with the decimal system, world geography, complex math, etc. Our Montessori children may not appear to be as knowledgeable as they truly are. Many of the concepts they have been exposed to in class will not be approached again until much later in their school careers. If not given a chance to reinforce and internalize these concepts, they will likely vanish.

Montessori is a method of education based on understanding. The mind of the child is approached via manipulatives. Research shows that actual movement and manipulation of the environment is the way young children learn best. Our concrete sensorial activities, repeated over time, help the child to form a mental image of the idea to be learned. Ordinary kindergartens lack the specialized, hands-on materials that offer isolated concepts to children.

Children who stay in their Montessori classroom for a third year are being given the gift of familiarity. Their confidence soars as they realize they know where nearly everything is, they know most of their classmates and they already know how the system works. This leaves them able to go on pursuing their studies and relationships in a confident manner. They are familiar enough with the activities and grounded in reality so their imaginations can really take flight. A third year child may think of doing an activity in a new way, with different papers, for example, or combining one activity with another. This is something a second-year student would likely not do.

The Montessori classroom contains what we call a Cosmic Curriculum. In our room, on our shelves, are the Keys to the World — materials and experiences that relate to any field of study one might think of. Children can truly pursue, not only math and reading, drawing and singing, but many other interests as well. We offer a richness that is simply not found in your neighborhood kindergarten.

Because of the freedom of movement and socialization in our classroom, the opportunity to observe other's needs and progress is present. Children in their third year can and inevitably do help others in their work. They see a younger child struggle to get their shoe on and offer to help. They see a peer finish a work cycle and offer to present to them the next lesson. They may teach a friend vocabulary they already know and in so doing, really reinforce that knowledge for themselves. This high level of responsibility is of benefit to the child in a number of ways. Firstly, they begin to appreciate how much they have learned and how much they have to offer. This is a solid foundation for self-respect. Secondly, they begin the habit of service to others. Serving one's community gives one's life meaning and the surest way to happiness is by practicing kindness. This is such a valuable experience right at this time. The child is still in his formative years so this can become central to his character, yet he is old enough to actually have gifts, skills and knowledge to share.

Our school has a social curriculum that is presented through the lessons of Grace and Courtesy, Conflict Resolution and also by our creed of inclusion. "You can't say you can't play" is our motto. The importance we place on the social aspect of education makes our school a wonderful, affirming place to be. Children here are respected, not rejected as they unfortunately sometimes are in other settings. In the third year, the social life of the child often becomes paramount and much attention is paid to how others are treated and how they treat their teachers. As this understanding of human interaction is formed and instilled in our children, how wonderful that they see such a benign, respectful model being played out each day at our school.

Lastly, allow me to invite you to think ahead to a possible fourth year in Montessori. Some children are ready to begin Montessori as early as two and a half. This means that by the end of their third year, they are still only five and not eligible for first grade. In nearly all cases, their Montessori classroom is still the best place for them. There is so much to do here, it is unlikely that anyone will explore the entire curriculum in three years, so there's still work ahead for this child. Some families will choose to keep their child in the Montessori primary class for a fourth year even though the child is eligible for first grade. Perhaps the child set a more leisurely pace for herself academically and needs the additional time to finish up. Perhaps the child is doing so very well in the freedom of the Montessori setting that it is best for her to continue on,

doing her work. Perhaps the child , even after the third year, never achieved that level of leadership that we set such store on. That feeling of being an elder, with much to offer is such a pivotal experience, it is worth spending another year to attain. It cannot be rushed. It develops and grows with the confidence level of the child. Some kids just need more time.

Whether you are approaching your child's third or fourth year in Montessori, the goals are the same. Everyone wants their child to be intellectually stimulated, joyful in their learning, with a deep understanding of key concepts. Everyone wants their child to be a confident, kindly citizen with a sincere concern for others. These are tremendous ideals and they don't come quickly or cheaply. They are something parents must invest in. The best time to invest in your child's future is now.

Health Policies

Staying Healthy

One of our best defenses is washing our hands. In class we talk to children about germs and how we can pass them from one individual to another and from one thing to another just by touch. We've also discussed mucous and saliva in conjunction with hands and fingers – when they come in contact, we always need to wash our hands immediately. So as you can imagine, we send many children to the sink often. Another component of this is HOW you wash your hands. Too often we see children put soap on their hands and immediately rinse it off! So here are the steps we have been going over in the classroom and we would be SO grateful if you would follow up on these with your children.

1) Turn the water on, wet hands, turn water off.
2) Put a little soap in your hand (or rub soap bar between hands) and then
3) Rub palms together, then the back of both hands, then
4) Grab each finger with the other hand and rub back and forth, giving each digit individual attention, then
5) Rub around each wrist with the opposing hand.
6) Turn on the water and rinse thoroughly.
7) Turn water off.
8) Dry hands.

To encourage adequate time is spent handwashing, encourage your child to sing a short song like Row, Row, Row Your Boat or Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.

Please also be sure your children wash their hands *before and after* entering the classroom.

Emergency preparedness

We have the basic supplies to hold us for three days stored in our outdoor shed if we are in an emergency situation that prevents us from leaving the school area. We are asking that you supply your children with a gallon-size baggie full of nutritious, nonperishable foods by the first day of school. At the end of the school year, we will return these bags to you.

Immunizations

The state requires that a child's immunizations be up to date and on file within 30 days of school entry.

School Medical Record

Each family is required to fill out a school medical record that gives a medical history of their child and current information concerning his health.

Medical Emergencies

Safety is stressed in the classroom, and on the playground. If a child has a minor injury or becomes ill at school, she will be cared for temporarily by the staff until the parent arrives. It is important that we have a **CURRENT** record of home, work, and cell phone numbers for both parents and that the Emergency Information Form has phone numbers of available relatives, friends or neighbors in the event that the parents can not be contacted.

Life threatening medical emergencies can be treated at Good Samaritan Hospital without parental consent according to Oregon Law. Any other necessary medical attention, in the emergency room, must have permission from the parent.

Emergency Information Forms

Each family needs to fill out an Emergency Information Form and return it to the school as soon as possible. This form provides us with important emergency information. We will need two local phone numbers and one out-of-state. The two local contacts should be able to pick up your child within 30 minutes if we cannot reach you. If they have cell phones, please include these numbers also. **Please keep the information on this form current and notify us of any changes immediately.**

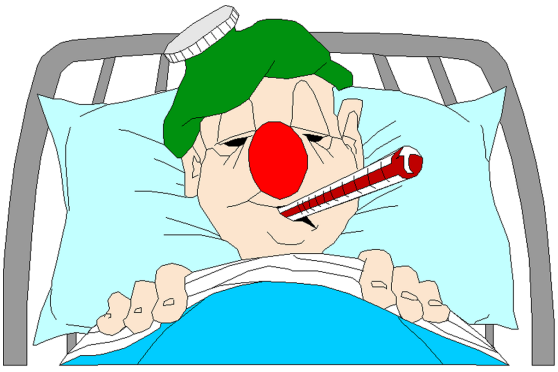
Medication

Medication may be given at school. Prescription items require instructions and the name of the physician. Both non-prescription and prescription items must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, dosage and time to be administered. **The parent must sign a permission slip allowing us to administer any medication, including sunscreen.** Our medical permission form is available on our website under FAQs & Forms.

Illness

Please report any communicable disease to the school as soon as possible after confirmation by your physician. There are times when a child should be kept at home for reasons of his health, as well as the health of the other children. If your child has any of the following symptoms, he must be kept at home.

Green mucous from the nose
Harsh cough
Chills
Fever
Enlarged Glands
Earache
Diarrhea
Skin rash
Inflamed Eyes
Sore throat
Persistent pain
Vomiting



Guidance Policy

Approach & Simple Situations

Our objective for each child in the Montessori environment is for her to develop "self discipline." The environment is prepared to offer the children a wide variety of satisfying and purposeful activities. The need for external discipline can often be met by redirecting the child toward one of these more appropriate uses of energy. We believe the use of positive commands and/or describing and informing the child of what we see can be very effective in eliciting cooperative behavior. Simply saying "Please walk." instead of "Don't run." can have positive results.

Many behavior patterns which affect the group are handled in a nonthreatening way though the use of "grace and courtesy lessons". The teacher models the behavior, and the children are given an opportunity to practice.

When circumstances indicate a child is in need of constant adult attention for a short period of time, the child may become "partners" with the teacher or assistant teacher until she is able to be self-directing again.

In situations where the child is screaming, pinching, kicking or hitting, the child is saying to us "Help me, I'm out of control." We will help the child by isolating her in the classroom and giving her an opportunity to regain self-control. Under no circumstances will physical punishment be permitted.

Adverse Situations

It is important to the PhMS staff that all children feel safe and secure in the school environment, and therefore protected by the teacher and assistant teacher from injury. Any child exhibiting extreme violent behavior will be sent home from school. Aggressive behavior, such as biting, kicking, and hitting, is not permitted in school. Your cooperation and support of the school in this policy will aid greatly in maintaining an atmosphere of calm and peace. In the case where on-going problems persist, a parent teacher conference will be arranged as soon as possible. At the conference the following procedures shall be employed:

A. Establish goals that are acceptable to the teacher and parents
B. Develop a plan to reach established goals
C. Arrange for a follow-up conference

The Philomath Montessori School reserves the right to dismiss any child when the school believes that the placement of the child in PhMS is not in the best interests of the child or the school as a whole. Except in extreme cases, 14 days notice of dismissal will be given.

Parental Misconduct

If a parent engages in behavior creating a danger or disruption to the school environment, to the children or the staff, the family may be required to withdraw immediately.

General School Information

Schedule of Classes

Classes are Monday through Thursday. The morning session is from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and full day is from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Morning Care is available from 7:45 – 8:50 am. Please refer to this section below for more information. School closures for holidays are designated on the school calendar. PhMS follows what the Philomath School District does in regard to severe weather conditions. School closure information is also posted on the Philomath School District web site: **www.philomath.k12.or.us/school_closure.php**.

You can also call the school phone. As soon as we know, we will leave a message at the school notifying you of a delay or closure. If there is a 1-hour delay, there is no change in our schedule. If there is 2-hour delay, we will open our doors at 10:00 am. Please recheck the web site or our message machine before leaving if school has been delayed – sometimes it is cancelled later in the morning. Because there is no minimum required number of school days set by the state for this age group, we do not make up snow days.

Arrival and Departure

Please try to be punctual. Arrival time is 8:50 - 9:00. Dismissal for morning session is 12:00 noon and dismissal for full day is 3:00. **Please call the school before 9:00 am if your child will be absent for any reason or arriving later than 9:10.** Attending school regularly is extremely important to a child's experience in school. Please try to schedule doctor and dentist appointments after school hours.

Parents should accompany the child to the entrance of the classroom to be sure that he arrives safely and we are aware of his arrival.

To give due respect to any church members and to help us maintain an environment that is calm, inviting, and conducive to concentration, we ask that everyone walk and use quiet voices, especially in the hallways. Some children will need to be held by the hand until they are ready to do these things on their own.

While in school, we need to focus our full attention on the children and they need to feel that school is a special time for them. We need to limit our contact to hello and good-bye. When dropping off your child, please say good-bye to your child outside the classroom, and away from the door so that it does not interfere with other children entering. If you need to pick up your child early, please knock on the door and, again, remain outside the classroom.

Parents/Guardians will be expected to pick up their children promptly when scheduled. If someone else picks up your child we need prior notice and he/she will need to bring a picture ID. For late pickups, there will be a ten-minute grace period after which a late fee of $5 will be levied.

To discuss a question or problem with us, please send a note to school or email us. We will contact you as soon as possible.

Morning Care

As a service to our families, we offer morning care for Philomath Montessori School students from 7:45 to 8:50 am. It is only available during the school year and can be contracted on an annual, quarterly, monthly, or drop-in basis. There is no morning care available the first week of school or when school is delayed or cancelled for severe weather conditions. If you are interested in using this service, please request an Morning Care Contract. You can also download and print one from our website.

After-School Play

Many of our families enjoy staying after school to share lunch or just hang out so the children can spend more time together. It is a great way to build our school's community. **But as tenants we need to be sensitive to the needs of the pastor and the other church members. Please be vigilant about ensuring that the children respect the church grounds.**

The church has requested that PhMS families use the basketball court and the surrounding grass area next to the parking lot on the east side of the church for after-school play keeping off of sidewalks and landscaped areas. So please no tree climbing and no playing in the bushes.

Because it is very helpful if there is consistency in expectations, we would like to share the guidelines that we use in the school play yard. We request that parents follow these guidelines on school and church grounds at all times. Your attention and consistency will make your child's play time with friends more peaceful and pleasant for everyone.

- The only items that may be thrown outside are balls. No gravel, pine cones, etc.
- No playing with sticks.

- No rough play: pushing or pulling another child, grabbing someone, anything that could cause possible injury.
- Children need to listen and respond to what other children are saying, such as if they are asking to be left alone, not to be chased, not to be touched, etc.
- You can't say, "You can't play." The children need to find a way to include every child who wants to play. (We realize that this can't be a hard and fast rule if the child who wants to play is being obnoxious or demanding. So we leave this to your better judgment. We just don't want children being left out because they are too young, they want a boy instead of a girl or vice versa, etc.)

Note: We encourage the children to do their own conflict resolution. However, very often the offending child will not stop to listen to a complaint. So we let the children know that we are always available to go with them to resolve a conflict, but we want them to do the talking – expressing how they are feeling and why they feel that way. The offending child then needs to demonstrate that they really heard by repeating it back to him/her. We don't let the offending child off the hook until he/she can do it in a sincere way. They take a break from playing until they are ready or they go inside.

Friday Art Class

We offer a Friday Art Class from 9:00 to 12:00 noon. It will only be available during the school year and there will be no Friday Art Class during the initial week of school. Friday Art Class can be contracted on an annual, quarterly, monthly, or drop-in basis. It is intended to be a service for Philomath Montessori School (PhMS) students only. Former PhMS students may attend on a space-available basis and by consent of the art class teacher. If you are interested in enrolling your child in this class, please request a Friday Art Class contract. You can also download and print one from our website.

Classroom Structure

Communications

If you have a specific request regarding your child, please hand us a written message. It will be an assurance that your request will be met. Paper and pencil are provided on the bulletin board for this purpose.

Please do not express concern in front of your child about their tiredness or illness, etc. Write them down and we will check on the child's well-being and call you if there is concern. When a child hears you express concern, then (s)he usually becomes concerned also.

Please do not expect feedback on your child, in front of your child. Call or make an appointment for a conference. We are more than happy to talk with you when the children are not listening in.

We encourage you to talk over any policy matters or concerns that you have about your child, the classroom, or the school in general with us. The best time to reach us is between 3:15 and 4:00. You can also leave a message letting us know when it would be convenient for us to call you. **E-mail is the preferred means of communications as it gives us time to reflect and consult each other before getting back to you.** Please restrict communications with us before and during school to emergency matters. Before school we need to concentrate on preparing the classroom and during school we need to focus on the children.

Special Needs Policy

Because we celebrate and consider diversity important to the health of the school and highly beneficial to the full development of every child, we welcome all children and are committed to integrating children with special needs into our program by

• providing professional development opportunities specific to a special child's needs and

• collaborating and consulting with professionals to meet a child's special health care and developmental needs.

Philomath Montessori School is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination towards children with disabilities and admission is open to all children that we can reasonably serve within the context of our limited financial resources and the need to create an environment that is safe and conducive to learning for all students.

Clothing

We need to keep a complete change of clothing at school for your child at all times. PLEASE help us by marking all clothing with your child's name. Because the children themselves often take on the responsibility of changing their own clothes, their clothing often gets taken out of their bags and baskets and mixed up. **If there are names on each piece of clothing it saves a tremendous amount of time and confusion.**

Because we want the time spent in the classroom to be the highest quality possible, we request that the children not wear character clothing (Power Rangers, Barbie, Pooh, Army fatigues, etc.). A good rule of thumb is assessing whether the clothing will be a source of distraction for your child or for others. An exception, of course, would be if the clothing is an ethnic piece and would serve as an enrichment for the class.

We try to foster the need for independence in children, so it is helpful if the clothing they wear is manageable for them. We have found that this is especially important when it comes to socks and shoes. Children need to remove these to do our Walking-on-the-Line activities and when they have difficulty removing and putting back on their socks and shoes, it sometimes means they will give up participating. And, of course, pants, tights and overalls which are impossible to get off quickly may mean the difference between having a toileting accident or not.

Once the weather turns inclement, each child should also bring a raincoat with hood or hat, and rubber boots every day. These boots are a separate pair to be worn outdoors, not in the classroom. We provide a canvas bag to store the boots at school during the week. Being prepared for any kind of weather allows the children to be outdoors working and playing every day.

To Bring Or Not To Bring

Children like to bring special things to share with the class, such as nature discoveries, music, books, things they have made or ethnic objects. We encourage children to bring in objects and books that can serve to stimulate their curiosity and heighten their awareness of their environment as well as broaden their language experience. School is a time to offer them something different, something special.

Toys, gum, candy, makeup, large jewelry, and items featuring fantasy/commercial characters are disruptive to the classroom and should be left at home. If your child is attached to bringing an inappropriate object to school, we will invite her to place it in a drawer near the entrance for safe-keeping.

Electronic Devices for Classroom Use

Classroom teachers may use an electronic tablet or similar device to show photos (especially for cultural work) and artwork to the children in a group setting or for playing music or sounds. The photos and sound must be free of advertisement and brand placement. We are permitting this use to save on ink and paper, classroom space for a sound system and to allow portability to the outdoors. The devices are never for use by the children. We believe that children at this age are better served by activities that involve hands-on engagement, movement, and social interactions.

Snack

Each morning we provide a light snack that includes protein, grains, and some kind of fruit and/or vegetable. This snack is on a self-serve basis and each child chooses when and if she would like to have snack. The number of children having snack at any one time is limited to two children and we help guide them with the amount they can take by providing a sample plate. Snack is generally available from 9:00 until 11:40. We have an account at the First Alternative Coop and usually one parent volunteers to do the shopping for our snacks. It is our goal to serve the children the highest quality foods – fresh, organic, whole grain, and with no artificial ingredients. If your child has special dietary restrictions, please let us know. Each September we add on an annual snack fee to your invoice to cover costs.

We request that each child bring a filled water bottle to school each day. Please be sure to mark your child's water bottle with his name.

Lunch

We encourage parents to allow their child to help make and pack their own lunch if it is age-appropriate for their child. For food safety, the health department recommends using insulated lunch containers. Please avoid lunch containers with commercial characters.

We encourage you to allow your child to help choose his lunch or better yet, encourage him to make his own lunch when he is ready. The night before school ask "Do you want egg salad or peanut butter for your protein?" "Carrots or cucumber for your vegetable?" Continue in each of the other food areas (dairy and grain) giving two choices. A general question like "What would you like for lunch?" or "What would you like for your protein?" could mean a protracted process that could end in exasperation for you and your child.

We will provide a plate and place mat for your child at school. We ask that you provide the necessary utensils and a cloth napkin each day. The food containers used for lunch should be tight-fitting, but also manageable for the child. This will help him to feel more independent and competent. **Please only send food in containers that are reclosable. After lunch we have the children repack whatever they don't eat so that you know how much and what they are eating.** Lunchtime in school is a social time — a time to learn some of the social graces of eating and a time to enjoy quiet conversation.

Birthdays

We have a birthday celebration handout with a description of our birthday ritual and suggestions for appropriate gifts. You can download and print a copy of our Birthday Celebration handout from our website: philomathmontessori.org under FAQs & Forms. We invite you as parents to attend this special occasion.

Please arrange your child's celebration a couple of weeks before your child's birthday by calling or emailing us to set a date. If your child has a summer birthday, she can celebrate her "half-birthday", again, with advance notification. We request that only May and June birthdays be celebrated during those months. We find that half-birthdays tend to stack up at the end of the year making it more onerous for the children rather than celebratory.

We would like to request that invitations to parties go out through the post office or email, since it is often not possible (and not advisable!) to invite everyone to your child's party.

Class Observation

Parents are encouraged to come in and observe the children in the classroom. Observations usually begin sometime in October to give the class a six-week establishment time to settle into a routine. There will be a sign-up sheet to avoid having more than one observer at a time. Please limit your observation for the time you

For Parents

have signed up for — long observations can be difficult for many children. However, we do encourage you to come in for as many as you wish. **We ask that the parents of new children observe only at the door.** After your child has had an opportunity to witness others being watched by their parents, you will get your chance to come in when we invite parents to observe in Spring (or Fall if your child enters in Winter). Sometimes an observation by a parent can be difficult for even a returning child, so if you notice your child is feeling uncomfortable, it is probably best to leave and try another day. It is helpful to take notes during the observation so that when you confer with one of the teachers you will be able to refer to what you saw.

Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled during Fall and Spring. You will be informed of the schedule through the school newsletter and there will be a sign-up sheet outside the classroom so that you can choose a time convenient for you and your family. If you have two children in school, please sign-up for two time slots. **Once you have made an appointment, please think as seriously about adjusting your conference time as you would any other professional appointment.**

Pre-conference observation is strongly encouraged. This provides the parent and teacher with relevant classroom situations to discuss. It is important that conferences be a two-way exchange of information. Written records of each child's activities are kept by the teacher. The teacher would appreciate information from parents such as:

- Your observations regarding changes you have noticed in your child since beginning Montessori school
- Whether your child has related school experiences and skills at home
- The unsolicited reactions of your child about school (children often say nothing when asked outright)
- Comments pertaining to your pre-conference observation of the class

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE)

The ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE are screening tools that our school utilizes to identify our students' strengths and areas of concern. The ASQ-3 focuses on communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social development (usually given in fall) while the ASQ-SE (usually in spring) assesses social-emotional health. As a parent, you are the best source of information about your child so the questionnaires are designed to be filled out by you. Please remember that ASQ provides a "snapshot" of a child's development. It is not designed to measure a child's maximum potential nor predict a child's social-emotional future well-being. After you have turned in the ASQ paperwork, we will connect with you regarding the results of the screening. If the ASQ identifies any areas of concern we will, with your consent, invite the support of Early Intervention (EI) to work with your family to investigate further screenings and services. We consider you an important partner in your child's learning and development.

Children's Open House

We have an open house for the children and their parents twice yearly. You will be notified through the yearly calendar, parent meetings, and the latest newsletter. This is a special event for the children, because it's a time when they show you the activities that they have been working

on in the classroom. The evening is divided up into 3 half-hour intervals so that there are only 7 or 8 families in the room at a time. Please indicate on the signup sheet which time slot you would like to attend with your child. If you have two currently enrolled children, please sign up for two slots. So that there will be ample room for everyone to move around comfortably, please limit your visit to thirty minutes.

Parent Workshops

The school offers parent workshops which provide an important connection between school and home. These workshops help parents to understand what we do in the classroom to meet a child's needs and what parents can do in the home as part of their vital role in the education process.

Newsletters

Newsletters are compiled and emailed to all families periodically. A few printed copies can be found in the mailbox area. Articles of interest, Montessori-related news items, announcements of a general nature, and news or reports from committees are all encouraged and welcome for consideration. All items can be given to our staff or our newsletter editor.

Parent Meetings

Parent meetings are held at regular intervals during the year to offer parents another avenue for participation in the operation of the school. These meetings will provide parents with news on what is happening in the classroom, as well as an opportunity to plan and participate in social and fundraising events. Each family can count 1.5 hours toward their volunteer hours for each parent meeting they attend..

Volunteer Work

A minimum of 20 hours of volunteer work is required of each family as a demonstration of their commitment to the children and the school community. Families have the option to pay $300 in exchange for those hours or $15 per hour for the balance of hours not completed. However, we strongly encourage our families to fulfill their commitment by direct involvement.

Fundraising

Each year, the families organize and conduct at least one fundraiser to augment our program wherever the greatest need exists. It is an opportunity to come together as a community, become acquainted with other families, and enhance our school.

Scholarship Fund and Tuition Assistance Loan Program

As part of our commitment to education, Philomath Montessori School has created a scholarship fund program to provide tuition assistance to families in need. Scholarship funds come from fundraising activities of current student families, alumni and voluntary contributions from school supporters. The amount available is limited and uncertain. If you would like your child/children to attend or to continue attending PhMS and believe it is not within your financial means, then you may be eligible for a scholarship for tuition assistance.

Our school has also established the Emergency Tuition Assistance Loan Program (ETALP), a loan of up to three months of half day or two months of full day student tuition for one eligible student per family during a school year. The ETALP is intended to help an existing student remain in class by providing a temporary loan of tuition during an acute family financial crisis or hardship.

If you would like to apply for either of these programs, please request an application from our office.

The deadline for scholarship fund applications is May 1

Tuition and Fees Policies

Registration Fee

There is an annual, nonrefundable registration fee of $50 per child, of which $10 will be applied to September tuition. This is not applicable to newly enrolled children.

Tuition Deposit

In order to assure a child's place in the school, a tuition deposit of one month's tuition must be paid in advance of enrollment. This does not pay the first month's tuition. For continuing students, the deposit is increased to the current monthly tuition rate (changes include tuition increases and the child's entrance into the extended day program). The deposit will be refunded after the student graduates or is withdrawn and all accounts are paid in full. For two or more children in one family, only one monthly deposit is required, that of the family's highest tuition rate.

Once received, this deposit is left in the treasury during the summer months to assure the child's place in the class for the fall.

Tuition Payment Policy

PhMS tuition is based on an **annual** tuition charge for both the Morning and the Full Day programs. The fee may be paid in full, in advance or in incremental sums such as 1/2 or 1/4. Most families elect to pay in monthly amounts. Tuition will not be prorated for absences, illnesses, vacation, etc. The tuition is due and payable to the school on the **first** school day of each month. Tuition is invoiced monthly in advance by email.

Timely payment discount: If the payment is made in full by 3:00 p.m. of the first school day of the month, a $10 discount applies per family.

Late payment fee: If the payment is received after 3:00 p.m. of the 10th of the month, a $10 late fee will be charged. Any family with an outstanding balance from the prior school year will not be permitted to reenroll or register a subsequent child until their balance is paid in full.

Sibling discount: The tuition for a second child enrolling in the school at the same time as his or her sibling, is granted a discount of 10%. This discount is applied to the lower tuition.

Payment of Tuition and Fees

All tuition payments and fees **must** be paid by check or money order. Checks should be made out to the Philomath Montessori School. Tuition may be placed in the tuition envelope in the appropriate hallway box at school or mailed to the school: Philomath Montessori School, P.O. Box 125, Philomath, OR 97370.

Withdrawal Policy

When withdrawing a child during the school year, parents must notify the school in writing at least 30 days before the first day of the month of the withdrawal. The last date for withdrawal during the school year is April 1. If withdrawing an enrolled child before the school year starts, notice must be given in writing by July 15; withdrawals after that date may forfeit their deposits unless a replacement student is found.

A Montessori Dictionary

Absorbent Mind: A mind able to absorb knowledge quickly and effortlessly. Montessori said the child from birth to six years has an "absorbent mind."

Adaptation: related to the idea of an absorbent mind (Haines, 1993) is a special power of the young child that can be called the power of adaptation. This power is a process whereby the young child absorbs the culture of her time and place, taking in all the spirit, the customs, the ambitions and attitudes of a society simply by living in that society.

Analysis of Movement: A technique used by Montessori teachers. The adult, when showing a complex action to the child, breaks it down into its parts and shows one step at a time, executing each movement slowly and exactly. The action thus becomes a sequence of simple movements and the child has a greater chance of success when "given the liberty to make use of them" (Montessori, 1966, p,108)

Children's House: The English name for Montessori's Casa dei Bambini [Italian]. A place for children from 3-6 years to live and grow. Everything necessary for optimal human development is included in a safe and secure environment.

Classification: Sorting. Allocating or distributing according to common characteristics. The young child engages in classification activities because the process is essential for the construction of the intellect. The Montessori classroom offers many opportunities for classification.

Concentration: The act of concentrating. The young child focuses his or her attention on aspects of the environment essential for development. From a Montessori perspective, concentration is "a consistent activity concentrated on a single work—an exercise on some external object, where the movements of the hands are guided by the mind (1983, p.149) Deep engagement.

Concrete to Abstract: A progression both logical and developmentally appropriate. The child is introduced first to a concrete material that embodies an abstract idea such as size or color. Given hands-on experience, the child's mind grasps the idea inherent in the material and forms an abstraction. Only as the child develops, is she gradually able to comprehend the same idea in symbolic form.

Control of Error: A way of providing instant feedback. Every Montessori activity provides the child with some way of assessing his own progress. This puts the control in the hands of the learner and protects the young child's self-esteem and self-motivation. Control of error is an essential aspect of auto-education.

Coordination of Movement: One of the major accomplishments of early childhood. Through the child's own activity, she refines her muscular coordination and consequently acquires increasingly higher levels of independent functioning. Because of this developmental need, children are drawn to activities which involve movement and especially to pastimes which demand a certain level of exactitude and precision.

Creativity/Imagination: Imagination involves the forming of a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses. Creativity is a product of the imagination and results from the mental recombining of imagined ideas in new and inventive ways. Both are dependent on mental imagery formed through sensorial experience.

Cycle of Activity: Little children, when engaged in an activity which interests them, will repeat it many times and for no apparent reason, stopping suddenly only when the inner need which compelled the child to activity has been satisfied. To allow for the possibility of long and concentrated work cycles, Montessori advocates a 3-hour uninterrupted work period.

Development of the Will: The ability to will, or choose to do something with conscious intent, develops gradually during the first phase of life and is strengthened through practice. The Montessori environment offers many opportunities for the child to choose. Willpower, or self-control, results from the many little choices of daily life in a Montessori school.

Deviations: Behavior commonly seen in children that is the result of some obstacle to normal development. Such behavior may be commonly

understood as negative (a timid child, a destructive child, etc.) or positive (a passive, quiet child). Both positive and negative deviations disappear once the child begins to concentrate on a piece of work freely chosen.

Discipline from Within: Self-discipline. The discipline in a well-run Montessori classroom is not a result of the teacher's control or of rewards or punishments. Its source comes from within each individual child, who can control his or her own actions and make positive choices regarding personal behavior. Self-discipline is directly related to development of the will.

Exercises of Practical Life: One of the four areas of the Montessori prepared environment. The exercises of Practical Life resemble the simple work of life in the home: sweeping, dusting, washing dishes, etc. These purposeful activities help the child adapt to his new community, learn self-control and begin to see himself as a contributing party of the social unit. His intellect grows as he works with his hands; his personality becomes integrated as body and mind function as a unit.

False Fatigue: A phenomenon observed in Children's Houses around the world—often at approximately 10 a.m. The children seem to lose interest in work, their behavior becomes disorderly and the noise level rises. It may appear as if the children are tired. However, if the directress understands this is simply false fatigue, they will return to work on their own and their work will be at an even higher level than before.

Grace and Courtesy: An aspect of Practical Life. Little lessons which demonstrate positive social behavior help the young child adapt to life in a group and arm him/her with knowledge of socially acceptable behavior: practical information, useful both in and out of school

Help from Periphery: The periphery is that part of the child that comes into contact with external reality. The child takes in impressions through the senses and through movement. Help from the periphery means presenting objects and activities in such a way so as to evoke purposeful movement on the part of the child. "We never give to the eye more than we give to the hand." (Standing, 1957,p.237)

Human Tendencies: A central tenet of Montessori philosophy is that human beings exhibit a predisposition towards exploration, orientation, order, abstraction, work, self-perfection, communication and a spiritual life. These tendencies are universal, spanning age, cultural and racial barriers; they have existed since the dawn of the species and are probably evolutionary in origin. "Montessori stresses the need to serve those special traits that have proved to be tendencies of Man throughout his history." (Mario Montessori, 1966,p. 21)

Independence: Not depending on another—"with various shades of meaning" (OED.p.836). Normal development milestones such as weaning, walking, talking, etc. can be seen as a series of events which enable the child to achieve increased individuation, autonomy and self-regulation. Throughout the four planes of development, the child and young adult continuously seek to become more independent. It is as if the child says, "Help me to help myself."

Isolation of a Difficulty: Before giving a presentation, the Montessori teacher analyzes the activity she wants to show the child. Procedures or movements that might prove troublesome are isolated and taught to the child separately. For example, holding and snipping with scissors, a simple movement is shown before cutting curved or zigzag lines; folding cloths are shown before table washing, an activity requiring folding. A task should neither be so hard that it is overwhelming or so easy that it is boring.

Indirect Preparation: The way nature has of preparing the intelligence. In every action, there is a conscious interest. Through this interest, the mind is being prepared for something in the future. For example, a young child will enjoy the putting together of various triangular shapes, totally unaware that because of this work his mind will later be more accepting of geometry. Also called remote preparation, the deeper educational purpose of many Montessori activities is remote in time.

Language Appreciation: From the very first days in the Montessori classroom, children are given the opportunity to listen to true stories about known subjects, told with great expression. Songs, poems and rhymes are a part of the daily life of the class. The teacher models the art of conversation and respectfully listens to her young students. Looking at beautiful books with lovely realistic pictures is also a part of language appreciation.

Learning Explosions: Human development is often not slow and steady; acquisitions seem to arrive suddenly, almost overnight, and with explosive impact. Such learning explosions are the sudden outward manifestation of a long process of internal growth. For example, the explosion of spoken language around two years of age is the result of many months of inner preparation and mental development.

Mathematical Mind: All babies are born with mathematical minds, that is, they have a propensity to learn things which enhance their ability to be exact and orderly, to observe, compare and classify. Humans naturally tend to calculate, measure, reason, abstract, imagine and create. But this vital part of intelligence must be given help and direction for it to develop and function. If mathematics is not part of the young child's experience, his subconscious mind will not be accepting of it at a later date.

Maximum Effort: Children seem to enjoy difficult work, work which tests their abilities and provides a sense of their growing power. They exult in giving their maximum effort. For example, a tiny child will struggle to carry a tray with juice glasses or push a heavy wheelbarrow whereas school-age children, if allowed to make up their own problems will prefer to sink their teeth into a challenging equation (1+2+3+4…+10)2 rather than drill on 3+5 and 6+2.

Memory Games: During the 3-6 period, children are building their memory. Sensorial Games provide children an opportunity to strengthen their mental muscles. A typical game goes like this: a child picks up a geometric shape from a drawer, lightly traces the shape with her fingers and then sets it back on the table. She then must carry that shape in her mind as she walks across a room full of distractions and finds its match amongst a set of cards at the opposite end of the room. Games like this build visual memory, a key component of reading. Similar games can be played in other sensory modes: auditory, tactile, etc.

Mixed Ages: One of the hallmarks of the Montessori method is that children of mixed ages work together in the same class. Age-groupings are based on developmental planes. Children from 3-6 years of age are together in the Children's House; 6-9 year olds share the lower elementary and the upper elementary is made up of 9-12 year olds. Because the work is individual, children progress at their own pace; there is cooperation rather than competition between the ages.

Normalization: If young children are repeatedly able to experience periods of spontaneous concentration on a piece of work freely chosen, they will begin to display the characteristics of normal development: a love of work, an attachment to reality and a love of silence and working alone. Normalized children are happier children: enthusiastic, generous and helpful to others. They make constructive work choices and their work reflects their level of development.

Obedience: Obedience is an act of will and develops gradually, showing itself "unexpectedly at the end of a long process of maturation" Montessori, 1967, p. 257). While this inner development is going on, little children may obey occasionally, but be completely unable to obey consistently. As their will develops through the exercise of free choice, children begin to have the self-discipline or self-control necessary for obedience.

Points of Interest: Montessori realized that if children spent too long a time on a complex task or failed to master the necessary details, the exercise would cease to interest them. These points guide the child toward his or her goal and stimulate repetition and interest by offering immediate feedback, or what Montessori called "control of error." The child's performance becomes refined through trial and error, the points of interest acting as signposts along the path to success.

Prepared Environment: The Montessori classroom is an environment prepared by the adult for children. It contains all the essentials for optimal development but nothing superfluous. Attributes of a prepared environment include order and reality, beauty and simplicity. Everything is child-sized to enhance the children's independent functioning. A trained adult and a large enough group of children of mixed ages make up a vital part of the prepared environment.

Presentation: The adult in a Montessori environment does not teach in the traditional sense. Rather she shows the child how to use the various objects and then leaves them free to explore and experiment. This act of showing is called a presentation. To be effective, it must be done slowly and exactly, step by step and with a minimum of words.

Psychic Embryo: The first three years of life is a

period of mental creation, just as the 9 months in utero is a period of physical creation. The brain awaits experience in the environment to flesh out the genetic blueprint. Since so much mental development occurs after birth, Montessori called the infant a psychic embryo.

Repetition: The young child's work is very different from the adult's. When an adult works, he sets out to accomplish some goal and stops working when the object has been achieved. A child, however, does not work to accomplish an external goal but rather an internal one. Consequently, they will repeat an activity until the inner goal is accomplished. The unconscious urge to repeat helps the child to coordinate a movement or acquire some ability.

Sensitive Periods: Young children experience transient periods of sensibility, and are intrinsically motivated or urged to activity by specific sensitivities. A child in a sensitive period is believed to exhibit spontaneous concentration when engaged in an activity that matches a particular sensitivity. For example, children in a sensitive period for order will be drawn to activities that involve ordering. They will be observed choosing such activities and becoming deeply focused, sometimes repeating the activity over and over, without external reward or encouragement. Young children are naturally drawn towards those specific aspects of the environment which meet their developmental needs

Sensorial Materials: The sensorial materials were created to help young children in the process of creating and organizing their intelligence. Each scientifically designed material isolates a quality found in the world such as color, size, shape, etc. and this isolation focuses the attention on this one aspect. The child, through repeated manipulation of these objects, comes to form clear ideas or abstractions. What could not be explained by words, the child learns by experience working with the sensorial materials.

Simple to Complex: A principle used in the sequence of presentations in a Montessori classroom. Children are first introduced to a concept or idea in its simplest form. As they progress and become capable of making more complex connections, they are eventually able to handle information that is less isolated.

Socialization: "The process by which the individual acquires the knowledge and dispositions that enable him to participate as an effective member of a social group and given social order" (Osterkorn, 1980, p.12). "Optimal social learning takes place when the children are at different ages" (Hellbrugge, 1979, p.14).

Sound Games: Many children know the alphabet but have not analyzed the sounds in words nor are aware that words are made of separate sounds (phonemic awareness). From the age of two (or as soon as the child is speaking fluently), sound games can make them aware of the sounds in words. In England, they use the nursery game "I Spy." The sound of the letter and not the letter name is pronounced.

Three Hour Work Cycle: Through years of observation around the world, Montessori came to understand that children, when left in freedom, displayed a distinct work cycle which was so predictable it could even be graphed. This cycle, with two peaks and one valley, lasted approximately three hours. In Montessori schools children have three hours of open, uninterrupted time to choose independent work, become deeply engaged, and repeat to their own satisfaction.

Three Period Lesson: "The famous three period lesson of Seguin" (Standing, 1957, p.307) is actually quite simple. The first period is NAMING. "This is thick. This is thin." The second period is RECOGNITION. "Give me the thick. Give me the thin." The third period consists of THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE WORD. "What is this?" In three simple steps, the entire learning process is brought into play. The three period lesson is used for giving language.

Vocabulary Enrichment: The young child's vocabulary increases exponentially in the years from 3-6. To feed this natural hunger for words, vocabulary is given: the names of biology, geometry, geography and so forth, can be learned as well as the names of qualities found in the Sensorial Material. The child's absorbent mind takes in all these new words "rapidly and brilliantly" (Montessori, 1946, p10).

Work: From an evolutionary perspective, the long period of childhood exists so children can learn and experiment in a relatively pressure-free environment. Most social scientists refer to this pressure-free experimentation as play (e.g., See Groos, 1901),

although Montessori preferred to call this activity the "work" of childhood. Children certainly are serious when engaged in the kind of play that meets developmental needs and when given freedom and time will choose purposeful activities over frivolous make believe ones.

Writing to Reading: In a Montessori environment, children usually begin writing before they can read. They are keen to create words with a box of loose letters (the moveable alphabet) or write their words with chalk or pencil. About six months later, they begin to understand what reading means, and they do so only through associating it with writing (Montessori, 1936/1983, p.142).

Annette Haines, January 2001

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Our Mission Statement

The mission of Philomath Montessori School is to nurture children's innate love of learning and urge for independence, guide their self-discipline, meet their developmental needs and connect them to the natural world while developing a community of support for our families.

Our primary aim is to assist each child towards becoming an individual that will positively impact the earth and it's future.

Philomath Montessori School

1123 Main St., Room 6

(in the College United Methodist Church,
next to the Benton County Historical Museum)

Email: phmsch@gmail.com

Web: www.philomathmontessori.org

Phone: 541-929-2672

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 125
Philomath OR 97370