

*The Montessori School
of Middleburg*

*P.O. Box 35
Middleburg, VA 20118*

540 687-5210

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Montessori School of Middleburg. We are glad that you have joined us, and we look forward to working together with you to provide an enriched learning experience for your child.

PHILOSOPHY

The Montessori School of Middleburg is a Primary Montessori School for children 2 1/2 to 6 years old. The Montessori School of Middleburg is founded on and operates within the educational philosophy developed by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952), who recognized and respected the natural interests and sensitive periods of learning present in children. The Montessori approach is centered on this respect for the child, on the development of the intrinsic curiosity, and on fostering independence, concentration, coordination, self confidence, and sense of order. The children work in various areas of the total curriculum, which includes practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language, geography, science, culture and movement.

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

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

GOALS FOR THE CHILD IN THE ENVIRONMENT

It is the goal of The Montessori School of Middleburg that the children develop within themselves the fundamental habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning. The children’s goals are:

1. To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
2. To develop a sense of high self-esteem.
3. To build habits of concentration for lifelong study skills.
4. To develop and foster an abiding curiosity.
5. To develop habits of initiative and persistence.

6. To offer a sense of inner discipline and a sense of order.
7. To develop sensory-motor skills in order to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge.
8. To develop socially-acceptable behavior.
9. To acquire the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning.
10. To help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations.

These goals will be developed through the use of the materials in the environment. The lessons given to the child by the directress show him or her how to handle the materials and what to do with them but the repetition is his or her responsibility. This repetition is the key to coordination and integration of development. It is through this repetition with the Montessori materials that the child reaches a deeper understanding of the work.

You can help your child by emphasizing the value of practicing and by encouraging repetition. You can show respect for the work he/she does over and over again. Very seldom does a child repeat activities for the wrong reasons and should this happen, we will definitely step in. Generally, you should rejoice to find your child repeating work.

STAFF

GOALS OF DIRECTRESS IN ENVIRONMENT

A Directress' job in the classroom is to observe carefully the interests of each child and then to guide that interest and stimulate it. Children become interested in a wide variety of areas, but they do it on their own schedule, so we accommodate ourselves to their schedules. We see that the children are introduced to and aware of all parts of the curriculum.

One of the most difficult tasks we have as teachers is to develop patience. Many people think that it takes a lot of patience to deal with young children because they ask a lot of questions and need a lot of help. This kind of patience is easy to come by. The patience that is hard to come by is that which allows you to wait and not give help too soon. It takes much patience to be able to watch a young child struggle through the buttoning of all his/her buttons, and then to watch him/her start unbuttoning and begin the process all over again.

It takes patience not to rush a child through the early stages of a task to get to the end, which is what interests us as adults. It takes patience to let children make mistakes and then realize and correct unaided. It takes patience to listen to a squabble and not interfere, but let the participants settle it alone. This willingness to wait, though hard to develop, is very important for the growth of confidence in the child.

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

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

There is one teacher and one assistant for each classroom. Each teacher and assistant has been chosen with care for his or her education, mastery, and warmth of spirit. Together we comprise an outstanding care-giving and educational community. All teachers and assistant teachers are carefully interviewed and references checked.

Directress – BethAnn Slater – 540 592-7013
Assistant – Kim Walton – 540 338-5510

Substitute and Program Directress - Clare Ferrell

SCHOOL HOURS

Morning Session (years 1 and 2) 8:45 – 11:45 with dismissal from 11:45 until 12 noon
Extended Day (years 3 and 4) 8:45 – 2:30pm (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday only)
Afternoon Program (available to all children) 11:30 – 2:30pm (special schedule for the year)

The children may arrive at school from 8:30 – 8:45. Please be on time. The assistant or teacher will greet your child, after which the children hang up their coats and belongings in the cubbies provided for storing these items. The children then enter to choose their first “work” of the day. Parents are requested to say their goodbyes in the car or at the latest in the cubbie room, as the entrance into our classroom is often disruptive to those children who have already started their work. If you should be late, please discretely place your child in the classroom. Please note that observations are welcome starting in October by appointment!

Dismissal for the morning session will be from 11:45 to 12 noon. Please be advised that a late fee will be charged for continually late pick up for morning or afternoon sessions. We will walk your child to the car for dismissals. We ask that you refrain from entering our classroom early so that our dismissal is orderly and without confusion. Should you need to pick up your child early, please notify us either with a note or a call, and we will have your child ready to leave promptly with you.

THE EXTENDED DAY

This is a longer day comprised of a Monday through Friday morning session and every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoon for the year. The Extended Day afternoons will include music and movement, eating lunch and more lengthy Montessori work. This is an option for children once they are in their 3rd year or when they are 5 beginning the school year. There is no additional charge for the three afternoons.

THE AFTERNOON PROGRAM

This is a special afternoon session that will be available to any aged child approximately twice monthly (with a specific schedule as part of the school calendar). Parents will have the option to reserve a space for the year, or may contact the school the day before. In the session the children will have music and movement, eat their packed lunch, take a 30 minute nap while listening to music and then work on a special project of the teacher's choosing.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event that weather conditions close Loudoun County Public Schools, The Montessori School of Middleburg will also close. We will follow their closure policy which is announced on all local T.V. and radio stations. Please be sure to check there if you have any questions. If Loudoun County Public Schools are 1 or 2 hours late, parents will be notified by telephone. We will try to notify you by 7:30am.

We do not usually make up snow days. In the event of extreme conditions causing the loss of several school days, additional days may be added to the school calendar at the discretion of the administration.

ENROLLMENT AND TERMINATION POLICY

The Montessori School of Middleburg accepts any child whose family is interested in a Montessori education as an approach to life. We admit children of any race, color, sex, religious belief, or national origin. We attempt to achieve a balance of age and sex for our classroom. Children must be able to participate and substantially benefit from our program without risk to themselves or to the other children.

The School reserves the right to require the withdrawal of a child if it believes the action to be in the best interest of the child or the school to do so.

TUITION PAYMENTS

Tuition Payments are due either once a year, twice a year, or monthly. Please see the tuition agreement.

HELP YOUR CHILD

There are several things that we would like to see parents do for their children:

1. Put seatbelts on every child for even the shortest ride. It may be a nuisance, but it is worth every minute it takes. You will not have a problem getting your child to accept wearing one if he/she realizes that you mean it and that you are consistent.
2. Keep television and video/DVD watching to a minimum. We see too much television and the like as a destroyer of creativity, imagination, and industriousness. Spend more time reading, talking, playing, singing, and working together. Allow time for your child to be alone with his/her own play, work, and explorations. Observing from a distance, out of his/her space will amaze you!
3. Bring your child to school everyday on time, ready to do his/her work in his/her environment. Practice patience by limiting your comment/questions to a brief "hope your day was fantastic" when you pick your child up. You will reap the benefits of a huge amount of information that comes freely from your child when allowed the freedom to share in his/her own time!

CONFERENCES

Conferences are scheduled twice a year. Conferences are important and can provide parents with specific information about a child's overall progress in school as well as highlight important information about the children for the teacher. The conference enables parents and teachers to be effective collaborators in the child's full development. Please do not hesitate to call if there are additional times you feel we need to have a conference regarding your child. I may contact you at other times throughout the year as well.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Beginning in October, observation is open to anyone interested in observing the Montessori environment. We encourage observation so that you can keep in touch with your child's experiences here at The Montessori School of Middleburg. All visitors are requested to schedule an observation time so as not to have too many visitors at one time. As a courtesy to the children, as well as to the teacher, please follow the observation guide that you will be handed upon arrival.

OUR PRIMARY CLASS CURRICULUM

A. PRACTICAL LIFE

For young children there is something special about tasks which adults consider ordinary – washing dishes, paring vegetables, polishing shoes, etc. These are exciting to children because they allow them to imitate adults. Imitation is one of the strongest urges during children's early years.

In this area of the classroom, children perfect their coordination and become absorbed in an activity. They gradually lengthen their span of concentration. They also learn to pay attention to details as they follow a regular sequence of actions. Finally, they learn good working habits as they finish each task and put away all the materials before beginning another activity.

B. SENSORIAL EXERCISES

The Sensorial Materials in the Montessori classroom help children to distinguish, to categorize, and to relate new information to what they already know. Dr. Montessori believed that this process is the beginning of conscious knowledge. It is brought about by the intelligence working in a concentrated way on the impressions given by the senses.

C. MATHEMATICS

Dr. Montessori demonstrated that if children have access to mathematical equipment in their early years, they can easily and joyfully assimilate many facts and skills of arithmetic. On the other hand these same facts and skills may require long hours of drudgery and drill if they are introduced to them later in the abstract form. Dr. Montessori designed concrete materials to represent all types of quantities, after she observed that children who become interested in counting like to touch or move the items as they enumerate them. By combining this equipment, separating it, sharing it, counting it, and comparing it, they demonstrate to themselves the basic operations of mathematics.

Children in a Montessori class never sit down to memorize addition and subtraction facts; they never simply memorize multiplication tables. Rather, they learn these facts by actually performing the operations with concrete materials.

D. LANGUAGE

In a Montessori classroom children learn the phonetic sounds of the letters before they learn the alphabetical names in a sequence. The phonetic sounds are given first because they are the sounds they hear in words that they need to be able to read. The children first become aware of these phonetic sounds when the teacher introduces the consonants with the Sandpaper Letters.

The individual presentation of language materials in a Montessori classroom allows the teacher to take advantage of the child's greatest periods of interest. Reading instruction begins on the day when the children want to know what a word says or when they show an interest in using the Sandpaper Letters. Writing- or the construction of words with the moveable letters- nearly always precedes reading in a Montessori environment.

Gradually the children learn the irregular words, and words with two and three syllables, by doing many reading exercises which offer variety rather than monotonous repetition. Also available in the Montessori classroom are many attractive books using a large number of phonetic words. Proceeding at their own pace, children are encouraged to read about things which interest them. Their skills in phonetics give them the means of attacking almost any new word, so they are not limited to a specific number of words which they have been trained to recognize by sight.

The children's interest in reading is never stifled by monotony. Rather, it is cultivated as their most important key to future learning. They are encouraged to explore books for answers to their own questions, whether they are about frogs, rockets, stars or fire engines.

In a Montessori class, the children are introduced to grammar through games which show them that nouns are the names of things, adjectives describe nouns and verbs are action words. The activity becomes most enjoyable.

E. PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

The large wooden puzzle maps are among the most popular activities in the classroom. At first the children use the maps simply as puzzles. Gradually they learn the names of many of the countries as well as information about the climate and products. The maps illustrate many geographical facts concretely. The children also learn common land formations such as island and peninsulas by making them.

F. COOKING AND NUTRITION

The children study the four basic food groups and learn what their bodies need in order to be healthy. They cook nutritious meals that revolve around their studies of countries.

G. ARTS AND CRAFTS

Art in the preschool environment strives to maintain the great joy the child finds in creating something of his or her own. The children have the freedom to explore their imaginations in a variety of mediums used for expression. The importance of the process is stressed at this time, not the end product.

H. MUSIC AND CREATIVE MOVEMENT

The creative music, movement and dramatics program is an on-going flexible process that integrates itself into the academic program of The Montessori School of Middleburg. The philosophy brings together the graphic notation symbols, the instruments and sound textures, and the principals of movement. The musical element of primary appeal to young children is rhythm and the natural response to rhythm is physical; therefore the body is the child's first instrument through which the movement in music is reflected and interpreted.

I. SCIENCE AND NATURE

In science the children's natural curiosity is stimulated through discovery projects and experiments, helping the children draw their own conclusions. The plant and animal kingdoms are studied in an orderly fashion to foster a love and appreciation for all living things.

CHILDREN'S FEELINGS ABOUT STARTING SCHOOL

Although some children happily start their new school adventure without a qualm, there are others for whom it is a difficult experience. This happens more frequently if there is a younger sibling at home and the child realizes that the baby will get undivided attention during school time.

If your child is fearful about your leaving him/her at school, there are several things you can do. Before arriving, be calm and reassuring about your appearance at 11:45 and describe how you will come to pick her/him up. In the morning, give a hug and kiss and say, "Have a good day, see you later." Then quickly leave without looking back. Even if your child is shrieking (and some children do), continue on out the door. We will step into the situation and help your child get over his/her fears. By leaving in this manner, you are saying to your child, "I know this is a safe place for you, I have confidence in your ability to handle the new challenges, and I will reappear on schedule."

Be assured that even the most chilling screams are over in a few minutes, and that crying at the door lasts only a few days. This way of leaving, rather than being hard-hearted and uncaring, bolsters a child's confidence more quickly. Protracted leave taking and emotional goodbyes only prolong this period. If your child uses a security blanket or toy and wants to bring it to school, tell him/her that school is not the place for a blanket, but that he/she may leave it in the car, and it will be there when you pick him/her up.

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

The children may bring anything of educational value or special interest to school to share. This may include books of interest, objects related to foreign culture, nature, small insects, animals (in containers), or other things that hold fascination for your child.

Please do not send toys, stuffed animals, candy, gum, or money to school. These objects can be a distraction to the class. We ask for your cooperation in this matter.

Flowers are an important addition to the exercise in the class room. Please send flowers from your garden for the flower arranging work.

WHAT TO WEAR TO SCHOOL

The Montessori philosophy stresses independence, especially in care of self. Please keep this in mind when choosing your child's clothes. Invite the child to help select his/her clothes daily (often best done before bedtime). We are delighted when a child shows up in an outfit that combines plaids, stripes, and checks, as this shows he/she is getting the opportunity to choose for him/herself.

Each child should have a complete change of clothes with his/her name marked on them. No jewelry, especially rings, should be worn or brought to school.

We will be painting and playing outdoors throughout the year. Please consider this in your choice of clothes for school. We will provide a smock for painting, but this does not guarantee absolute freedom from spills. If the item of clothing is valuable, please do not make it available for school use. Children's clothing for school should be casual, simple play clothes which they can manage by themselves.

HEALTH

Help us keep children healthy by keeping your child at home if he/she is sick and uncomfortable. Do not send your child to school if any of the following symptoms are present: fever, rash, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat, or discharge or profuse amounts of mucus from the nose.

We will do daily health checks on the children, checking their ears, eyes, nose, throat, scalp and skin.

You do not have to call if your child is absent due to a minor illness. Please let us know about communicable diseases so we can let other parents know.

Medicine will only be given when medical release forms are completed. The staff will report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities.

EMERGENCIES

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of illness, the school will not hesitate to seek the proper care for your child. The child's individual emergency instructions on file are consulted immediately and the parents are called. If neither is available, we will contact the people listed on the Emergency Care record. Please keep the Emergency contact information up to date.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

The law in Virginia is that all children under 7 years must be in a car seat. On school field trips we will abide by this law. All children will enter and leave vehicles from the curb side of the street. Each chaperone will have a list of the children in his/her car. Children are to remain seated at all times, with arms, legs and head inside the vehicle. Car doors are to be closed and locked properly. The first aid kit and emergency numbers are brought along on the trip.

SNACK

Snack will be available daily for your child. It is left out and the children may choose to have snack when they are hungry and there is a place available at the snack table. We will be emphasizing good nutrition throughout the year.

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

Discipline shall be constructive in nature and include techniques such as:

1. Using limits that are fair, consistently applied, and appropriate and understandable for the child's level,
2. Providing children with reasons for limits,
3. Giving positively worded directions,
4. Modeling and redirecting children to acceptable behavior,
5. Helping children to constructively express their feelings and frustrations to resolve conflict,
6. Arranging equipment, materials, activities, and schedules in a way that promotes desirable behavior.

There shall be no physical punishment or disciplinary action administered to the body such as, but not limited to, spanking, shaking, rough handling a child, force withhold or substitute food, force or withhold naps, forcing a child to assume an uncomfortable position (ex. Standing on one foot, keeping arms raised above or horizontal to the body), restraining to restrict movement through binding or tying, enclosing in a confined space, box, or similar cubicle, or using exercise as punishment.

Children who show unacceptable behavior are redirected in their behavior, given reason for limits on their behavior, and given possible role models to copy. They are never punished for a toileting accident. They may be asked to sit next to the teacher or the assistant for a while, away from a certain child. They may also be asked to sit on a chair for regrouping. Children who do not follow rules outside will be asked to sit by the teacher or assistant.

MESSAGES

If you have a message for us, please jot it down on paper. It is difficult for us to remember verbal messages, especially if they are all coming at the same time! If your child is to be picked up by someone other than the two authorized people on your emergency care form, **HE OR SHE CAN ONLY BE RELEASED WITH WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM YOU.**

BIRTHDAYS

We celebrate children's birthdays with a little birthday ceremony. It needs photos from each year your child has been alive. We have a "birthday preparation package" that includes mini muffin pans and a bulletin board. Please help your child decorate the board about their life. This package will go home the week prior to their birthday to allow enough time to prepare. Children can enjoy having a birthday snack at school. We suggest that families provide a special snack for their child's celebration. Carrot cupcakes with cream cheese frosting, decorated with raisins are a popular birthday snack. (No sugar, candy, etc., please.) If you are planning a home party for your child, please do not hand out invitations in school. It can be quite upsetting to those not invited.