



PARENT HANDBOOK

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

“Education is the help which we give to life so that it may develop in the greatness of its powers. Before we can give, we must understand...If we can understand, we can help, and this help must be the plan of our education: to help man to develop, not his defects, but his greatness.”

Maria Montessori

London, 1946

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“The real essence of the Montessori method is to help the natural process of human development, to create integrated personalities...that is..

PEOPLE ...

- who have a sense of responsibility
- who know their limitations, and their greatness
- who have a sense of duty toward themselves and society...and...
- who, having a clear vision, can make a positive contribution to solving social problems.”

Mario Montessori

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Montessori Day School community! The MDS staff is pleased to be working with you and your children. We realize that you, as parents, are especially sensitive to your own child's needs and we appreciate your choosing MDS for your child's educational needs.

Studies show that children do best when the family is engaged in their learning and schooling. It is our goal to form a partnership between you and the school that will enrich your children's educational experience and your family's life. Your close association with the school will benefit both you and your children. Your children's growth and learning will be greatly enhanced as you learn more about Montessori principles and apply them in your home.

At MDS, we stress parent participation and provide many ways for you to become involved: parent education meetings, classroom observations, conferences, community events, school support and fundraising activities, and family oriented events. By participating, you will get to know the Montessori philosophy and curriculum, your child's work, the school staff, and other families in our community. Your participation is vital for your child's success and for the ability of the school to thrive. It truly does take a "village" to raise a child. Our School-Parent-Student Compact outlines basic partnership responsibilities to support our students' success.

Please read this Parent Handbook carefully. It will answer many questions about the school and the various aspects of our program. Keep it accessible for reference during the year. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please call us, send us an email, or write us a note and we will get back to you.

We look forward to growing and learning with you and your children in the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Margaret "Peg" Huffman
Executive Director

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF MONTESSORI DAY SCHOOLS

At Montessori Day Schools (MDS), we strive in every way to uphold Dr. Maria Montessori's time-tested philosophy of education, which is based on "a harmonious growth of all potentialities of the child, mental and physical, according to the laws of its being..." (Montessori, 1945). We believe that everything we do should reflect respect for each child, their potential, their individuality, and their humanity.

Maria Montessori stated that children have a natural tendency toward learning, and that stages of learning exist for which there should be corresponding educational environments and trained teachers who "prepare the environment." Children then enjoy learning independently, using the materials within the environment. The teacher structures presentations, coaches and directs the children, and observes as they become more capable of choosing their own activities and initiating their own learning. In this way, the teacher becomes the guide, the link between the child and the environment. The learning environment cultivates individual potential, the ability to make sound choices, concentration, independence, personal responsibility, problem-solving abilities, social interaction, interdisciplinary breadth, and competencies in basic skills.

Montessori said that children's play is their work. In this same spirit, we believe that children learn through doing, experimenting, making choices and making mistakes. In this way, they gain mastery of their physical bodies, their emotions and their minds. As children gain mastery in these areas, they learn to use knowledge not as an end goal but as a tool in the process of becoming independent thinkers, creative problem solvers and self-actualized individuals.

We believe that a school should be a learning community of educators and families working in partnership to create the best environment possible for the children's growth and learning as well as their own. As members of a community, we help and support each other in all ways that we are able, through our knowledge, labor, talents, time and creativity.

Finally, we believe that quality education should not drain a family's financial resources nor waste the resources of our planet. Thus, we are committed to providing the highest quality educational programs and services for the lowest possible cost. To do this successfully requires the active participation, assistance and cooperation of every member of the school community, working together to keep costs

down and quality high. This is true at every level of the program and in every area of school operations, whether private or chartered.

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IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Mountainside Campus - Pat Freeman, Director

602-943-7672

Lakeshore Campus - Theresa Averill, Director

480-730-8886

MDS Billing -Debi Reed, Bookkeeper

602-943-7672

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

Children are accepted into the programs at Montessori Day Schools in the following order: current students, siblings of current or past students, and new enrollees. New enrollee applications are accepted during open enrollment. Should there be more applicants than available spaces in any particular level during open enrollment, available positions will be filled by lottery and those applicants who are not selected are placed on a waiting list.

The following items are needed to complete enrollment:

- An enrollment application that has been signed and dated
- A completed emergency form
- Proof of child’s identity and residency

CLASSROOM PLACEMENT AND PARENT REQUESTS

Student classroom placement is based on multiple inputs and considerations and is team-based. Parent requests for a particular teacher must be made *in writing* and presented to the Campus Director. Consideration will be given to such requests but the final decision for classroom placement is made, in the best interests of the child, by the school team members. Changes in classroom assignments will only be made if the team determines that the well-being of the child is seriously affected by not making those changes.

DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>TIME</u>
Primary (3 – 4 yrs)	Half Day Full Day	8:30am - 11:30am 8:30am - 2:45pm
Kindergarten (5 yrs by Sept. 1)	Half Day Full Day	8:30am - 11:30am 11:30am - 2:45pm
Elementary	Academic Day	8:30am - 3:15pm
Middle School (Mountainside Campus)	Academic Day	8:00am - 3:15pm

EXTENDED CARE SCHEDULE

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>TIME</u>
Primary (Pre-school & Kindergarten)	Extended Day All Day	8:00am – 4:30pm 7:00am - 6:00 PM
Elementary	Extended Day All Day	8:00am - 4:30pm 7:00am - 6:00pm

Extended care (Extended Day and All Day Programs) is available on non-class days as indicated on the School Calendar.

THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The first day of school is an important event in any child's life. Adjustment to entering a school program for the first time depends a great deal on the attitude of the parents and their cooperation with the school staff. School should be seen as a normal and natural part of growing up and an extension of the child's home life. A few days before classes start, begin teaching your children the names of their teachers.

School Supplies- You will receive a list of items your child needs either when your child is enrolled or, if your child is a returning student, in July following the previous school year. It is important to bring ALL items that your child will need for the first day of school. This may include bedding for children who nap, changes of clothing, and classroom supplies. Make sure all personal items (such as clothing and lunchboxes) are very clearly marked with your child's name.

EVERY DAY

Sign-In and Sign-Out - All Pre-K students ***MUST*** be signed in and out in accordance with Arizona Daycare Licensing requirements. This applies also to Kindergarten and Elementary students enrolled in Extended Care programs. A FULL SIGNATURE (FIRST AND LAST NAME) IS REQUIRED.

Upon arrival, make sure you sign in your Pre-K or Extended Care child/ren on their page in the Sign In/Sign Out Book *with your full name*. Stay with your child/ren while they put their lunchbox in the designated cooler. If you have young children, help them put extra clothing and nap items in their appropriate places. Then accompany your child/ren to the extended hours area or the playground and check your child/ren in with the staff person on duty in that area. Supervise

your child/ren at all times they are not formally in the care of school personnel.

Pre-K and Extended Care students MUST be signed out on their page in the Sign In/Sign Out book. *UNDER ARIZONA STATE LAW, ONLY PERSONS LISTED ON THE CHILD'S EMERGENCY FORM IN THE OFFICE ARE AUTHORIZED TO PICK THE CHILD UP FROM SCHOOL. IF ANOTHER PERSON MUST PICK YOUR CHILD UP, PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE AHEAD OF TIME (PREFERABLY IN WRITING) TO GIVE US THAT PERSON'S NAME. WHEN THAT PERSON PICKS THE CHILD UP, HE/SHE WILL BE ASKED TO SHOW A PICTURE I.D. BEFORE THE CHILD IS RELEASED INTO HIS/HER CUSTODY.*

Pick-up and Drop-Off are the busiest times of the school day. Please observe safe driving practices and keep your eyes open for children and parents in the parking lot. DO NOT PARK IN RESTRICTED AREAS. DO NOT LEAVE YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE CAR UNATTENDED. DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CAR UNATTENDED WITH THE MOTOR RUNNING. Do supervise your children at all times they are not formally in the care of staff on duty.

Drop Off - Keep good-byes short and sweet. Prolonged leave-taking promotes insecurity. Children who cry when parents leave usually stop very soon once their parents have gone, as they become interested in their school activities.

Gate Security – For children's safety, close and secure doors and gates when entering or exiting the campus buildings and grounds Stop ALL children from standing, climbing, or swinging on gates and fences, since this behavior causes breakage and needless, expensive repairs.

Folders - Check for messages in your family folder (or personal delivery by elementary students) and in posting areas. Also be sure to check your e-mail and Bloomz.

Concerns – Any concerns should be put in writing, in hard copy or by email, and addressed to the campus director and/or to your child's teacher. Doing so is one of the best and most effective ways to help us resolve problems.

Lost and Found - Check for lost items on a daily basis. Unclaimed items will be given monthly to the local thrift store.

DRESS CODE

Primary students should wear comfortable clothing that is easy to slip on and off and which they can manage themselves when going to the bathroom or changing. Do not send children in costumes, party/dress clothes, boots or flip-flops. Shoes should have soft, non-skid soles to help with good coordination and balance. **JACKETS, SWEATERS, LUNCH BOXES, AND ALL PERSONAL ITEMS MUST BE CLEARLY MARKED WITH CHILDREN'S NAMES.** Please send a name-marked change of clothing to be kept at school in case of need and replace it as needed. If your child has a toileting or other mishap and has no extra clothing, you will be called to pick up your child or to bring some clean clothes.

Elementary and Middle School students are required to wear a uniform as described in the current Uniform Policy addendum. Parents will be called to bring appropriate attire if necessary.

LUNCH

MDS does not provide lunch for students. Parents are responsible for sending a lunch every day. Please mark your child's lunchbox or bag **CLEARLY** with the student's name.

Do not send food that must be heated or microwaved. Soup, chili, and other hot liquids can be sent in a thermos labeled "Hot Lunch" and kept un-refrigerated. Only standard size rectangular lunch boxes or bags are allowed in the lunchbox refrigerators.

Candy and soda are not allowed. If a child comes to school with either, it will be sent home unopened.

Please pack your child's lunch in reusable containers. We try to teach the concept of reduce, reuse and recycle whenever possible. In addition, support your children to help shop for and make their own lunches. Begin this practice with your Pre-K child.

Help your child develop a sound, healthy body and mind by providing tasty and nutritious lunches. Children work hard at school and need "real" food to learn and grow. Fruits, vegetables, cheeses, raisins, nuts and nut butters, whole-grain breads and crackers, and non-sugared granola bars are appropriate; highly sugared and processed foods are not. Beverages should be 100% fruit juice, milk, or water. Small portions of a variety of foods serve young students best. If your child is in after-school care, please make sure they bring enough food for their afternoon snack.

NAPPING

Children who nap at school need two fitted crib sheets and, if the child wishes, a small (12"x10") pillow with two pillowcases, all clearly marked with the child's name. *Health Department regulations prohibit children from sleeping on uncovered mats.* Nap items will be sent home on Fridays for laundering and are to return with your child the following Monday.

DISMISSAL/ LATE PICK UP FEES

Children who are not enrolled in an Extended Care program are picked up at the end of their class day. On early-release days, class dismissal is at 11:30. Students in Extended Care programs must be picked up by their designated pick-up times. At pick-up time, children must be supervised by the adult picking them up.

Parents must call the office if they are going to be late for any reason. If your child is not picked up within ten (10) minutes of their designated dismissal time, you will be charged a late pick-up fee as indicated on the school's Tuition and Fee Schedule.

ATTENDANCE

Absences - Parents must call the school to report a child's absence as soon as possible so that we can inform the child's teacher, report absences accurately to the Arizona Department of Education, and avoid truancy action taken by the State. *Frequent absences will result in a meeting with the teacher and/or campus director. Excessive absences give cause for denying promotion to the next grade. Ten (10) absences per academic year are considered excessive.* In addition, charter student absences diminish program funding for all students.

Tardiness - Children arriving after 8:30 AM are late and must come to the office to get a pass to class. *Frequent tardiness will result in a meeting with the teacher and campus director since it interferes with the child's learning and jeopardizes consequent grade advancement. Please understand that 3 tardies have at least the negative impact of one day of absence.* Tardiness also disrupts the child's class and creates needless busywork for office personnel. It is important to time your arrival such that your child can enter the classroom with their classmates.

Appointments- If your child will be leaving school early for an appointment, please notify the office in writing before the scheduled appointment.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are planned throughout the year for students in grades 1-8 (less frequently for primary students) to enhance their educational program. Permission slips are sent home in advance for the parent to sign. **NO CHILD MAY GO ON A FIELD TRIP WITHOUT A SIGNED PERMISSION SLIP.** Children aged five and younger must be in a car seat when traveling. Parent volunteers are needed for driving and supervision on class field trips.

BIRTHDAYS

Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays in special ways. Since each class develops special customs to honor birthdays, please check with your child's teacher about class traditions.

STUDENT HEALTH

The health of all our students and staff is of prime importance to us. Please safeguard your children and others by keeping them home when they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- A temperature above 98.6
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Any rash
- Discharge from the eyes or ears
- A fresh cold with sore throat, runny nose or cough

If a child becomes ill at school, they will be isolated from the other children and parents will be called to pick the child up promptly. PLEASE KEEP ALL EMERGENCY INFORMATION CURRENT WITH THE OFFICE SO WE WILL HAVE NO PROBLEMS CONTACTING YOU. If a parent cannot be reached, the office will call the alternate pick-up names on the emergency card. If a parent or an alternate contact cannot be reached after reasonable efforts have been made, the school must contact Child Protective Services.

Contagious diseases - (including strep throat, diarrhea, pin worms, conjunctivitis, impetigo, head lice, measles, mumps, chicken pox, and scarlet fever) must be reported to the school office immediately. If your child has been exposed to a contagious disease, please monitor the child's health and keep him/her home if you suspect infection.

Medication - If your child has prescription medication that must be administered during the day, please give the medication in its original bottle to the office along with *written instructions* for its use. The school will NOT dispense non-prescription medication including cough drops, vitamins and herbal supplements. PLEASE DO NOT SEND THESE ITEMS TO SCHOOL WITH YOUR CHILD.

Immunizations - State law requires all students to have a current immunization record on file for school attendance.

Accidents - If your child is in a serious accident, you will be contacted immediately. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency information provided to the school and the authorization for emergency care is utilized to provide medical care. *IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU KEEP THIS INFORMATION CURRENT.*

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Observing your child's classroom is one of the most effective ways to understand the Montessori experience and can greatly benefit parents, children, and the teaching staff. We encourage parents to observe their child's class at least twice a year starting in mid-October (once the classes have developed a routine). Observation appointments can be made through the office.

YOUR CHILD'S WORK

Do not be discouraged if your child does not relate many specifics about their school experience. Usually children have been working with many different activities throughout the day and learning a corresponding new vocabulary. For the young child, specific recall can be difficult, while older children often consider their work as very much their own business.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the Montessori method emphasizes process rather than product. That is, the effort and learning gained from that effort is more important than the end result. Work with many of the Montessori materials does not result in a "take home" product. It is internalized and the "product" is the total child. You will need to be patient as your child gradually reveals newly acquired skills and knowledge. Listen to your child's questions, engage in "hands-on" activities with them (like hiking, cooking, yardwork, board and card games) and support their interests. Monitor and limit all screen time to no more than one hour per day – and *never before school* because of the difficulty the brain has, for several hours, with post-viewing engagement and concentration. The above is your – and their – true "homework."

DISCIPLINE POLICY

A sound Montessori program fosters understanding, care and respect for all life. It is an educational approach for peace, beginning with peaceful classrooms. Our goal is to minimize adult control by fostering students' growth in respect, self-discipline, personal responsibility and positive self-direction. To this end we employ specific processes and

lessons to assist children while protecting the mental and physical safety of our students at all times. (See the "Responsible Thinking Process" handout or go to www.responsiblethinking.com for basic guidelines regarding disruptive behavior. We also recommend the book *Discipline for Home and School: Fundamentals* by Edward E. Ford.) As a start, we offer the following from Ed Ford's book:

"For children to succeed, they must believe you care about them, that you have confidence in their ability to solve problems, and they must experience mutual respect. The stronger the relationship, the easier it is to resolve differences. If done in a calm, respectful environment, this responsible thinking process can help build that relationship. It also teaches self-discipline through responsible thinking." Remember: "**Ask, don't tell**." Ask questions in a calm, respectful, curious voice. Never yell or tell, always ask. *Avoid excuses by not asking why.*"

Should a student's behavior be repeatedly disruptive to others, they will be required to leave the group, think about their behavior, make a plan for what they will do if allowed to return, and negotiate their way back. Please note: if a child must leave the group to create a plan, the parents will be called and a copy of the student's plan will be sent home for review with the student. Should there be further disruptions, a parent conference will be scheduled to determine a common course of action. Further disruptions will require more stringent measures, including the child leaving school. Parents are strongly advised to be active participants in helping their children to learn self-discipline and to work with school staff when problems arise.

Suspension and Expulsion – Only the Executive Director or the Campus Director may suspend or expel a child. **Suspensions and Expulsions become part of the child's permanent record.**

Suspension for up to five (5) days may result from the following actions:

- Breaking the terms of the Behavior Contract
- Serious behavior or safety infraction
- Malicious behavior, vandalism or extreme disrespect
- Possession of drugs, alcohol, weapons, tobacco, illegal paraphernalia or obscene/offensive material

Expulsion is the most serious form of discipline and results in the permanent removal of the child from the school. **If a child is expelled, no other public or charter school is required to accept that child as a student.** Two general questions are considered when making the decision to expel a child:

1. Is the moral and/or physical well-being of individual students or the student body endangered?
2. Is there a prolonged and open disregard for school authority and/or does the student continually violate probation?

Grounds for **immediate** expulsion include but are not limited to:

- Carrying/bringing a weapon to school, or anything which may be reasonably considered to be a weapon
- Using an object to threaten or behave in a threatening manner to staff or other students
- Possession, use of, or being under the influence of any alcoholic beverages or any form of illegal drug on campus including giving or selling illegal drugs of any kind to any person
- Flagrant insubordination
- Theft of or malicious damage to school property or the personal property of staff or students
- Further misconduct after being placed on probation
- Violating civil law or any other unique action that is deemed highly unsafe or abusive, or violating the reasonable rights and dignity of others

Right to Search – MDS reserves the right to search and inspect lockers, bags, etc., when those in authority deem it necessary to do so.

Biting – An occasional biting incident is a normal part of toddler development. However, as children develop language abilities and are supported to express frustrations verbally, biting incidents are viewed differently. Should there be a biting incident, parents will be called and may be asked to remove the biting child from the school until the problem is under control.

CELL PHONES

Students are NOT allowed to use cell phones on campus for any reason. Parents may contact their children by calling the school office. If a student is found to be using a cell phone, it will be held in the Campus Director's office until a conference is held with the parent. The phone will NOT be sent home with the student and a discipline notice will be placed in the student's permanent file.

THE SCHOOL OFFICE

The school office is a very busy place during school hours and, while we will make every attempt to assist you immediately, we appreciate your patience when the office is busy. The office telephone is NOT available for personal calls by parents, children or staff except in an emergency. Students may use the school phone only with express permission from a staff member.

If you have any questions or concerns about admissions, class placement, dismissal or other school related issues, please schedule an appointment through the office to meet with the appropriate person.

All messages regarding illness, a change in a child's schedule, appointments, etc., are to be communicated through the school office. Please notify the office also if a child is going to be absent from school for any reason.

Changes in address, phone number, emergency contacts, and/or transportation arrangements must be communicated to the office immediately.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA gives

parents certain rights with respect to their children’s education records including the right to inspect and review their child’s school record. All MDS parents receive a handout at the beginning of the year, or at enrollment, explaining their FERPA rights.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Montessori Day Schools provides special education services to those students who qualify in accordance with all state and federal laws. A copy of our Special Education Policies is available for review in the School Office. Please contact your campus director for more information.

TITLE I SERVICES

Title I is a federal program designed to ensure that all children have a “fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education.” (Title I statute) Any child who is academically challenged and meets federally established criteria may receive Title I services. These services are currently made available under a schoolwide plan that includes extra instructional assistance and specialized materials that help students achieve their academic potential. Please contact your Campus Director for more information.

ENGLISH LEARNERS PROGRAM (EL)

During enrollment, all parents of charter students must complete a PHLOTE form indicating the primary language spoken by the child. Those children for whom English is *not* their primary language are screened for English proficiency with a state-approved test. Children who do *not* test out as fluent in English (this includes reading, writing and speaking) are considered English Learners (EL). In alignment with Arizona state law, MDS employs an Individual Language Learner Plan (ILLP) within the regular classroom that assures 4 hours of daily English language instruction and encourages English fluency as quickly as possible. Parents are notified of the results of their child’s screenings and, if the child is classified as an EL, they are also notified of their child’s participation in our EL program.

CHILDFIND

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires all states to have a "comprehensive Child Find system" to assure that all children from birth through age 21 with delays or disabilities are located, identified, and referred to appropriate services through the Arizona Department of Education. If you or someone you know has need of such services, please contact your campus office for referral to the appropriate agency.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Student Records – Student records are maintained in each campus office. When students withdraw from MDS, the student's records are sent to the new school once the new school has submitted an authorized request for records. A copy of the records is kept at MDS in compliance with the Arizona State Records Retention Schedule. Parents who wish to have their child's records released *must* fill out a Student Withdrawal form/Records Release Authorization form.

Parent/Teacher Conferences – Parent/teacher conferences are held three times a year, in August, October and February. Please check the school calendar for exact dates. If you would like to have a parent/teacher conference at another time, please contact your child's teacher to make arrangements. Teachers may also request additional conferences if necessary.

Parent Participation – Studies show that parent involvement is a critical factor in a child's success, in school and in life. It is the responsibility of *ALL* parents to get involved. Our School-Parent-Student Compact outlines parent participation opportunities. You might volunteer for field trips, wash classroom laundry, make classroom materials, be a homeroom parent or events coordinator, work as a substitute in the classroom. The opportunities to be involved are many and varied, and are communicated in many ways - postings, emails, flyers, sign-up sheets, newsletters, personal contact, and other means unique to each campus and classroom. We count on parents to watch for them, to get involved, ideally with committees explained at Parent Orientation events.

Campus Visitors – All visitors on campus *must* sign in and out at the office and wear a visitor name badge during their visit.

Insurance – MDS carries an insurance policy that complies with the requirements of the State of Arizona.

Transportation – Transportation to and from school is the full responsibility of the parent, excepting transportation for a student qualifying under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Teacher and Assistant Qualifications – You may ask in the school office to see qualifications of your child's instructors.

State Health Regulation – MDS facilities are regulated by the Department of Health Services located at 150 N. 18th Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona, 85007. The department phone number is (602) 542-1000. Inspection reports are available from the Campus Director at each site.

WHAT IS MONTESSORI EDUCATION?

Dr. Maria Montessori wrote that the most important period of life is not the age of university studies but the years before, *“for that is the time when man’s intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed. But not only his intelligence, the full totality of his psychic powers...At no other time has the child greater need of an intelligent help and any obstacle that impedes his creative work will lessen the chance he has of achieving perfection.”*

Maria Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. Rather, they must do it themselves or it will never be done. Truly educated individuals continue learning long after the hours and years they spend in the classroom because they are motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for learning. Dr. Montessori felt that the goal of education should not be to fill children with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to provide an environment which cultivates their own unique potential and desire to learn.

In the Montessori classroom, this objective is approached in two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of discovery through work of their own choice, and second, by helping them to perfect all their natural tools for learning so that their abilities will be at a maximum in future learning situations.

Sensitive Periods

Another observation of Dr. Montessori, which has been reinforced by modern research, is the importance of the sensitive periods of learning. These are periods of intense fascination for learning a particular characteristic or skill such as going up and down steps, putting things in order, writing, forming moral judgments, and nurturing. If these skills and characteristics are not given the wherewithal to flourish, they sometimes do not develop at all (language, for example). The energy is misdirected and the individual is left weakened for life (drug use versus nurturing, for example). The Montessori classroom takes advantage of nature's timetable by allowing the children the freedom to select activities that correspond to their own period of interest and need.

Individualization

Children mature at very different rates and their periods of readiness for academic subjects vary a great deal. Because interest is stimulated and materials are at hand whenever children are ready, many children in Montessori classes work at levels far beyond what is generally expected of children who are the same age. However, early "advanced" learning was never Dr. Montessori's objective. The ideal was that the learning experience should occur naturally and joyfully at the proper moment for each individual child. "It is true we cannot make a genius." Dr. Montessori wrote, "We can only give each individual the chance to fulfill his potential possibilities to become an independent, secure and balanced human being." Because the Montessori program is designed to meet individual needs, it is successful with children of diverse backgrounds and abilities, both handicapped and gifted.

The vastness of individual potential and the depth of Dr. Montessori's vision is confirmed daily by studies in scientific areas, particularly that of brain/mind research. We strive to further the application of her vision, using and sharing the emerging new scientific knowledge. With parents as our partners, we will grow together in our ability to serve the unlimited potential of each child.

Learn More about Montessori Education

To learn more about Maria Montessori and her educational philosophy and methods, we recommend the following:

Books:

- Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, by A. S. Lillard
- The Secret of Childhood, by Maria Montessori
- Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, by E. M. Standing

- To Educate the Human Potential, by Maria Montessori

Some websites: there are many:

<http://www.montessori.org/parents-information>

www.montessoriguide.org

www.mdpsc.org