

The Montessori School of Camden

Parent Handbook '11-'12

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Introduction

Montessori education at an early age provides children with a lifetime gift—the opportunity to develop fully their innate intellectual, physical, social, and emotional potential. The Montessori School of Camden (MSC) encourages parents to be an integral part of their child’s education by learning about the Montessori philosophy, observing in classrooms, and volunteering in the school. MSC is a non-profit corporation guided by a Board of Directors elected from parents, community leaders, and staff. The Montessori School of Camden is a full-service school, open Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and operating year-round. Class times are listed under each individual program description. The staff is certified and the classrooms are approved through Montessori Educational Programs International (MEPI), a MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) member.



The Montessori Method and Its Origin - A Historical Perspective

Maria Montessori was the first woman to become a physician in Italy. At the turn of the century, this was an amazing accomplishment. However, becoming a medical doctor was only the first step in her long, successful career. She began her professional research with observations of mentally challenged children and was greatly influenced by the work of Jean Itard and Edouard Seguin. In 1901, she seemed to be at the high point of her career, when actually she was still preparing for an unknown future. She felt a need for further study and re-enrolled at the University of Rome to study philosophy, psychology and anthropology. In 1906, at the age of 36, she was an educator, writer, lecturer and medical doctor. The stage was set. She started a school for underprivileged children in the San Lorenzo district of Rome. Since funding allowed only office style furnishings, she contracted a carpenter to make smaller, child-sized furniture and equipment of her own design. She began this school with 60 unruly children under the age of six. As she worked, she observed and modified, modified and observed. Within six months, her results were phenomenal. She began attracting countrywide attention. These children displayed self-discipline, preferred learning materials to toys, and worked with a profound concentration and joy. They had a love for order, respected their environment, and enjoyed working in silence beside their friends. The children would carry on “business as usual” with or without the teacher’s presence.

Almost immediately, her work became known and practiced worldwide. She was invited by Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison to the United States for the first time in 1913, and schools bearing her name and using her method were begun in many countries. She refused to patent her name or work, because she

wanted to see this approach to life grow freely, and it has. Sometimes the name “Montessori” has been used in schools where the method is not practiced. However, the books she wrote have greatly influenced the early childhood programs of today, Montessori or not. There was wisdom in her decision to allow the method to evolve.

Maria Montessori was a genius before her time. She believed that the child’s mind from birth to six years is quite different from the adult’s and labeled it “an absorbent mind”. This child effortlessly soaks in everything in his culture and environment. Modern scientists are, almost a century later, now finding scientific data to support her discoveries. She saw a tremendous need for the child to have respectful and intelligent help during the absorbent mind stage. She saw the child as constantly unfolding and developing himself and saw the adults who were trying to teach him as obstacles to his process. Her life work could be summed up as defining the nature of the child and the role of the adult in helping him, thus easing the tug-of-war that exists when two completely different natures meet:

...The child loves concentration—the adult entertains or interrupts him. The teacher in this prepared environment respects his concentration and allows him to complete it. This involves everything from watching a bug on the windowsill to drops of water on a table.

...The child loves repetition and the adult becomes bored with it. Montessori allows this freedom, with respect, as the child perfects his movements.

...The child loves order but the adult provides a toy box which can afford nothing but disorder. (Try keeping your kitchen organized within a toy box.) The prepared environment offers shelves with neatly arranged activities returned to the same place.

...The child thrives on the freedom to choose his activities but the adult prefers that everyone do the same thing at the same time. The prepared environment offers the solution. “This is my work; yours is on the shelf”. With this freedom to choose comes the responsibility to return it to the shelf correctly.

...Children prefer work (learning) to play (toys); adults don’t. A child’s work is his preparation for life; hopefully, when he matures, he will enjoy his work for he has perfected what he likes to do best.

...Children don’t need rewards; adults like to think they do. Accomplishment and creativity are reward enough. A child is self-motivated at this stage and, in the proper environment, will remain so as he grows.

...Children love silence; adults demand it. The Montessori environment creates an awareness of silence. “Let me see if you can tip-toe away so quietly I can still hear the birds chirping.”

On and on her discoveries go toward providing a practical way to a peaceful coexistence with children.

Maria Montessori developed materials for refining the senses. The materials help the child to discriminate sound, color, size, shape, smell, and touch. The materials in the classroom area called “practical life” deal with using the child’s

love of movement, concentration and repetition, and help him develop good work habits, concentration, hand-eye coordination, lengthening attention span, and control of body. The activities build on the child's natural interests and involve pouring, sweeping, dressing, stacking, folding, wiping, polishing, and washing—all of which address care of the environment, care of the self, and grace and courtesy. Conversational manners, table manners and courtesy to others are all part of the activities in a Montessori classroom. Her math equipment is regarded by many as the most complete available. Four-year-olds can have a thorough and effortless understanding of the decimal system. The reading materials teach both phonetic and sight reading skills at an age when the child absorbs language easily. The curriculum also includes geography, music, art, science, and history materials. The method is adaptable to all subjects. All Montessori exercises employ movement, manipulatives, free choice (within limits) and a point of completion. They are usually self-correcting and help the child develop his sense of order, his concentration, and his independence. The director (teacher) prepares the environment and is trained to know when to intervene in the child's self-directed learning. This knowledge comes through her practice of the art of observation. The child is given what is termed as "liberty within limits". There are limits:

- ...He may freely choose to work with anything that he has been shown how to use.
- ...He must use the materials properly and return them properly.
- ...He may not infringe upon the rights of others.

Within this framework, the child develops freely in individuality and self-confidence. The child is given the opportunity to become independent and care for himself/herself in a responsible way. He flowers and becomes an inner-directed member of school and family. All of this will happen to the extent that the child is exposed to these ideas. The more communication and cooperation between the family and directors, the more benefit the child will receive from his Montessori experience.

Maria Montessori, a wonderfully gifted individual, revealed many of the mysteries, not only of childhood, but also of human nature. Her books are read all over the world, in many languages. The significance of her discoveries is yet to be fully understood, as much of her work is still being translated and compiled. She died in 1952 in Holland after training directors all over the world.

One could write volumes and speak for hours on Montessori philosophy. This is only a beginning of the explanation of the thinking that goes on behind these educational methods. It should be emphasized that children are not merely little people trained to be adults; they are the other pole of humanity. They add the balance. Adults and children all over this planet must walk hand-in-hand, learning from each other, accepting each other, and providing balance for each other. The Montessori approach to life is universal and, when practiced authentically, has the potential to guide humanity towards world peace. The practice and the pursuit begins within each individual.

Written by Gale Keppler

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The Global Montessori Community

The product of Dr. Montessori’s work can be found everywhere. Because the focus in the Montessori classroom is the child rather than the adult, the Montessori educational model is less tied to cultural norms of the community in which it finds itself. As a result, Montessori schools can operate beside traditional, state-supported systems in all parts of the world and increasingly is being added in American public schools. Of the approximately 8,000 Montessori schools in the world, about 6,000 operate in the United States—private, public, and charter.

The word “Montessori” is not protected—Dr. Montessori expected her ideas to grow and become modified, and she did not want it to become frozen in time. But the principles she expressed are universal. A number of organizations interpret Dr. Montessori’s thoughts, adapt them to today’s circumstances, and affirm teacher education programs and schools. Among these are MACTE and MEPI, mentioned in the introduction. MACTE is the globally-recognized gold standard for teacher education programs. Our professional society, MEPI, while small, includes school and training center members from Croatia, Egypt, Israel and Mexico as well as the United States. The Association Montessori Internationale (AMI—founded by Dr. Montessori) and the American Montessori Society (AMS) are the best known societies created to support teacher preparation, but about a dozen others around the world perform similar functions. Additionally, the International Montessori Council (IMC), of which MSC is also a member, focuses on the Montessori leader cadres around the world. Both the IMC and AMS also have school accreditation programs.

While an independent, private school, MSC operates as an integral part of a global network that gives support and allows horizons far beyond the boundaries of Kershaw County or South Carolina.



History of The Montessori School of Camden

The Montessori School of Camden began its existence in 1979 as the satellite pre-kindergarten and kindergarten of Joseph Kershaw Academy (JKA). Its founder and first director was Dr. Sheryl Sweet. In the early 1980’s, JKA began to experience financial difficulties. In order to maintain the high quality of education provided by the Montessori model, the staff accepted the Montessori materials in lieu of their salaries and began independent operation. The school incorporated as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization under South Carolina law in May 1985 and began the 1985-86 school year with primary and elementary programs, after-school

care, and a summer program. Classes were held at the old JKA facility, and the school ended the year with 72 students.

For two years, the school operated at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church. In 1988, the Montessori family moved to the location on Battleship Road. In 1993, the school added a 1,600 sq. ft. extension to create the building now called Beard Hall. In August 2000, the school purchased another 4 acres and accepted a donation of three more acres in preparation for its planned expansion. Ground was broken on a second building in January 2002, and two more acres were added, bringing the campus to just over 11 acres in size. The new facility, Bossong Hall, and the campus road, “Montessori Way” were completed that year and promptly occupied by administration and two classes. In July of 2004, Primary Hall was opened, adding three more classrooms and increasing the capacity of the school to 181 students. Throughout these many changes in the school’s life, now past our thirtieth landmark year of operation, one constant remained: the close family relationships forged in the caring, Montessori environment.



Mission

The mission of The Montessori School of Camden is to engage students to become peaceful citizens of the global community using the Montessori approach to nurture in them an enthusiasm for learning, resourcefulness, a sense of responsibility for their actions, and respect for themselves, others, and their environment.



School Organization

The school is organized as a private, non-profit (501(c)(3) corporation governed by a Board of Directors and guided by written By-Laws. The “corporation” consists of all parents of the school and all members of the faculty. The Board consists of up to twelve members, three of whom are voting ex officio (Headmaster, an elected representative of the faculty, and the President of the Parent Advisory Council), seven members elected by the corporation to terms of three years and two members from the community, invited by the Board to sit for terms up to three years. The Headmaster is responsible to the Board for administration of the school and the carrying out of its mission.



Montessori Vocabulary

The Environment

The “Prepared Environment” is Dr. Montessori’s concept that the child’s environment can be designed to facilitate maximum independent learning and exploration. A prepared environment contains space for a great deal of movement and a variety of activities arrayed on shelves from the concrete to the abstract and from the simple to the complex. In the calm, ordered space of the Montessori prepared environment, children work on activities of their own choosing and at their own pace. They learn and experience a blend of freedom and self-discipline especially designed to meet their developmental needs.

The Materials

In the Montessori classroom, learning materials are arranged invitingly on low, open shelves. Children may choose from all the lessons that have been demonstrated to them and that attract their interest. They can work with them as long as they hold the children’s interest. When they have finished with each lesson, they return it to the shelf from which it came. Bright arrays of solid geometric forms, knobbed puzzle maps, colored beads, and various specialized rods and blocks attract children who learn through interaction with the materials. Each lesson in a Montessori classroom isolates one quality. In this way, the concept that the child is to discover is presented more clearly. Moreover, the materials are self-correcting. When a piece does not fit or is left over, the child easily perceives the error; thus, there is no need for adult correction. The child is able to solve problems independently, building self-confidence, analytical thinking skills, and earning the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment.

“Normalization”

Dr. Montessori used the terms “normal” and “normalization” to describe a unique process she observed in child development. When children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and contented. Through continued, concentrated work of their own choice, children grow in inner discipline and peace. She cited “normalization” as “the single most important result of our work.” (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 1949).



Program Descriptions

Montessori's philosophy of education is based on “the personality, a harmonious growth of all potentialities of the child, mental and physical, according to the laws of its being....” (Montessori, 1964).

Montessori observed that children have a natural desire to learn and that stages of development exist for which there should be corresponding educational

environments and trained adults who prepare the environment. Children can learn independently in a prepared environment; the adult in the classroom is the link between students and the environment. By providing freedom of choice, this enriched learning environment cultivates individuals who learn to make independent decisions and to solve problems creatively. They learn to create healthy social relationships, to develop skills in concentration, and to master basic academic and life skills. We challenge their minds to create, explore, and imagine.



Infant (Ages 6 weeks - 18 months)

The Infant class is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Parents choose time slots according to their needs—morning only, morning until 2:30pm, all day, or afternoon only. Our low class ratio of 3:1 provides a comfortable, intimate environment.

In the infant room, the children develop according to their own natures and have the freedom to create their own personalities. We follow each child's natural growth pattern. The environment conforms to the physical needs of the children, both in the size of the furnishings and in the opportunities for motor development. In a Montessori atmosphere the children are free to explore their environment and develop physically, socially, intellectually and academically in activities and learning areas. Here infants learn to care for themselves and interact with one another and their environment in an atmosphere of loving support and respect. Montessori materials and equipment are especially designed to help little muscles develop coordination, helping the child gain independence and self esteem. Special attention is given to the development of expressive and comprehensive language skills.

The Montessori classroom provides a prepared environment where infants develop naturally in their own way and at their own pace. The prepared environment is characterized by order, simplicity and beauty which meet the needs of the child. The focus of the infant environment is on fostering basic trust in the child.

At the Montessori School of Camden, we believe in following the child, and we work closely with parents to make sure that each child's individual needs are met.

Your child's eating, sleeping, and diapering are documented every day. This record is available for parent review when they pick up their child. Children are fed on demand or per their schedule, and diapers are checked every other hour and as needed between scheduled times. All food and formula is provided by the parents. Parents should bring pre-made covered formula & breast milk bottles. All food and bottles must be labeled with the child's name (first and last) and contents. These bottles must be taken at pick up to be sanitized at home. Parents should also bring diapers, diaper wipes, and extra change of clothes.



Toddler (Ages 18 months - 36 months)

Toddler class time is from 8:20 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The Montessori classroom is a children's room, dynamic and fluid. Classroom Directors present lessons to each child when he/she is ready to receive them. Children choose their self-correcting materials from open shelves and work independently or in self-selected small groups. Over a period of time, the children develop into a "normalized community," working with high concentration and few interruptions. The program includes the following components:

- ☞ Practical life exercises enhance the development of intellectual organization and independence through care of self, care of the environment, exercises of grace and courtesy, and refinement of physical movement.
- ☞ Sensorial materials enable the child to order, classify, seriate and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, color, etc.
- ☞ Language work includes oral language development and children's literature.
- ☞ The child is also presented with geography, life sciences, physical sciences, music, art, and movement education.
- ☞ Spanish is completely integrated into the curriculum.

The prepared environment unifies the psychosocial, physical, and academic functioning of the child.



Primary and Primary All Day (Ages 3 - 6)

Primary class time is from 8:20 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Primary All Day (PAD) continues until to 2:30 p.m. The Montessori classroom is a children's room, dynamic and fluid. Classroom Directors present lessons to each child when he/she is ready to receive them. Children choose their self-correcting materials from open shelves and work independently or in small groups. Over a period of time, the children develop into a "normalized community," working with high concentration and few interruptions. The program includes the following components:

- ☞ Practical life exercises enhance the development of intellectual organization and independence through care of self, care of the environment, exercises of grace and courtesy, and refinement of physical movement.
- ☞ Sensorial materials enable the child to order, classify, seriate and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, color, etc.

- ☞ Montessori mathematics, through manipulative materials, allows the child to internalize the concepts of number, symbol, sequence, sets, place value, operations and memorization of basic facts.
- ☞ Language work includes oral language development, written expression, reading, grammar study, creative dramatics and children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters, moveable alphabet, and various presentations allowing children to link sounds and letter symbols effortlessly and to express their thoughts through writing.
- ☞ Spanish is integrated into the curriculum.
- ☞ The child is also presented with geography, history, life sciences, physical sciences, music, art, and movement education.

The prepared environment unifies the psychosocial, physical, and academic functioning of the child. Children enrolled as Primary All Day students have opportunities for additional academic work, science experiments and creative expression following lunch and quiet time until 2:30 p.m. Younger children who stay for extended care will have lunch and naptime with their classmates in Bossong Hall. After 2:30 dismissal, remaining children move to the Extended Day program at Beard Hall.



Lower Elementary (Ages 6-9)

Lower Elementary class time is from 8:20 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The elementary program offers experiences that build on those of the primary class. Throughout the day, the children work with manipulative materials in each component of the curriculum. Many of the special materials are designed to help the children understand their world, transferring their concrete experiences into abstract thought. Since reading skills are essential for the child, the Lower Elementary program offers thorough instruction through a variety of methods designed to meet the needs of each child. The phonics, whole language, and sight word lessons that are used in the Primary program grow more complex. The Junior Great Books literature enhances reading comprehension and interpretation. Spanish is continued at a more sophisticated level. Field trips are an integral component of the curriculum. Physical fitness is encouraged by outdoor activities, including daily walks when weather permits. The environment reflects a new stage of development in the child and offers the following: an integration of art, music, sciences, geography, history, and language that evokes the natural imagination and abstraction of the elementary child's mind. The presentation of knowledge through the Great Lessons as part of a large-scale narrative reveals the origins of the earth, of life, of human communities (agricultural and urban), of empires, and of modern history. The presentation of formal scientific languages of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc. exposes the child to accurate, organized

information that respects the child's intelligence and interest. The use of lines, picture charts and other visual aids provides a linguistic and visual overview of the beginning principles of each discipline. The mathematics curriculum is presented with concrete materials, which simultaneously reveal arithmetic, geometric and algebraic correlations. The various aspects of the elementary program are designed to assist the child in developing self-awareness and acceptance of self and others; a cooperative responsible community spirit; a keen intellect; self-motivated learning habits and skills; and a healthy mind, body and spirit.



Upper Elementary (Ages 9-12)

Upper Elementary class time is from 8:20 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. The goals of this program include the development of self-motivation in learning, responsibility to one's self and community, self-discipline, healthy self-confidence, concern for others, academic advancement, physical fitness, and growth in moral and ethical understanding. The day is spent in varied activities covering curriculum areas of language arts, mathematics, physical and natural sciences, geography, and cultural studies. Research is a major component in integrating learning in these areas. Students learn to gather information and to communicate it both orally and in writing. The Junior Great Books program helps students develop critical thinking skills in literature-based discussions. Spanish studies range from beginning conversation to translation and writing. Students study mathematics and geometry as an approach to problem solving. Manipulative materials enable the students to discover mathematical relationships as they develop a mind appreciative of the beauty and usefulness of mathematics. Within the various scientific disciplines, science studies grow out of the student's natural curiosity. In this age group, the students progress rapidly from concrete learning experiences to abstractions. As they complete the cycle of work in the Upper Elementary class, they have experienced many approaches to learning and are able to make the transition to other educational methods with confidence.



Special Curricula

The core Montessori curricula have already been explained for each level. In addition, several special curriculum subjects are woven throughout each level of the school. While each subject is treated differently according to the developmental level of the child, learning builds upon the understanding gained at the previous level.

Bilingual Program

In January 2009 MSC began transition to a bilingual format. By integrating native speakers of Spanish into each classroom, students become immersed in two languages. Rather than learning one as a “second language” students see both English and Spanish simply as different but equal ways of communicating. Currently the Infant, Toddler, and two Primary classes have converted to the bilingual format. Classes that have not yet become bilingual receive Spanish classes several times per week. This transition will continue until all classes have an assistant and a classroom director who are native speakers of each language. This exceptionally important step capitalizes on the sensitive period for language that usually presents itself with our youngest children. Those who join us after that period will find both languages spoken in the classroom and quickly adapt themselves.

Peace Education

Dr. Montessori was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize twice, and Peace Studies have always been an integral component of a Montessori education. Because children move about the classroom freely throughout the day, and as a result have much more opportunity to interact than in a traditional classroom. Learning the skills of collaboration, compromise, taking turns, and cooperation are essential to harmony in the classroom and serve our children wherever they go throughout their lives. As children move from parallel play to collaborative play as Toddlers through group projects in the Elementary years our students learn to speak directly and respectfully to each other and develop mechanisms to control their own emotions. Teachers and more experienced children serve as role models, with soft voices and respectful behaviors. As a result, Montessori children have more advanced social and emotional skills.

Physical Education

The Montessori experience develops not only the intellectual, social, and emotional aspects of a child’s development but also the physical component. Because they are not confined in cage-like cribs once they become mobile, infants develop gross motor skills at a young age. Both gross motor and fine motor skills are emphasized for the remainder of their years at MSC. For example, Toddlers manipulate puzzles with grasping knobs and participate in songs with a physical component to develop balance and coordination. Primary children have more refined knobbed puzzles, walk the carpet line or the balance beam to develop gross motor skills, and begin rudimentary organized outdoor games. Elementary students may choose such activities as knitting, improving their hand-eye coordination, and play games outside each day. Some of these games such as dodge ball or capture the flag are organized to help children learn rules—and learn to play by them—while others are free-play physical games to allow them to express their creativity. Additional opportunities are available at an additional charge with afternoon programs in gymnastics and dance.

Art

Both art appreciation and creative arts are available in the classroom. Beginning in the Toddler classroom examples of the works of famous artists are on display, and Classroom Directors discuss the “artist of the month” with the children at line time. Primary and Lower Elementary classrooms have easels available for the children. The Extended Day program also emphasizes art projects.

Music

Music is ever present at MSC. Not only does music offer a calming influence, it also connects children to their cultural heritage, and resonates with mathematics. Gentle music plays in the background in all classrooms. Orff Music lessons are available in Primary and Lower Elementary classrooms. Teachers lead songs for children as young as toddler age, and children in many classes discuss the “composer of the month”. Toddlers nap to Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos. Bells in the Sensorial area of the Primary classroom help children sharpen their ability to distinguish pitch. Additional opportunities are available at an additional charge from a staff member who teaches guitar and an adjunct staff member who teaches Suzuki violin.



Extended Day Program

The Extended Day Program is available before and after school hours. A minimum of two staff members will be on duty throughout the day. The school-day ratio of twelve or fewer students to one staff member is maintained. The goals of the Extended Day Program include the provision of a safe, creative, and nurturing atmosphere with organized activities. This program offers a quality environment that meets the physical, social, and emotional needs of all students and parallels the expectations of individual responsibility and respect found in the Montessori classroom.

When school is not in session the campus is usually open as a convenience for parents who need care for their children. These Extended Day periods are called “Rainbow Days”, and employs school staff during the same hours of operation as the school. Several weeks before such occasions the office sends out an enrollment sheet for parents to register their children for Rainbow Days.

Students in the program enjoy the Montessori approach throughout their day. While primarily an arts-enrichment program, some of the other offerings include manipulative blocks, creative drama, cooking, art, science experiments, cultural studies, and gardening. Plenty of free time is allowed for play. The Extended Day Staff strives to create, as much as possible, a “home-like” environment.

A supervised work/study time for elementary students will be provided each day. Parents must send a note requesting that their child be excused from this study time if they so choose.

Fees for the before- and after-school Extended Day Program are based on \$4.00 per hour. Parents may choose a single payment plan for the year instead of the hourly rate, with varying rates for Infants, Toddler and Primary Morning students, and Primary All Day and Elementary students. Siblings of enrolled Montessori students are welcome to participate in the Extended Day Program. The rate for these family members is \$4.00 per hour. Arrival and dismissal on the hour and half-hour will be observed for billing purposes. Late fees will be assessed according to the Accounts in Arrears and Late Fees Policies.

Extended day ends at 6:00 p.m. A **\$1.00 per minute late charge** is due to the teacher on duty for any child not picked up by that time. Fees not paid directly to the teacher on duty will be added to the next bill sent out by the office.

A twenty-four hour notice is preferred, when possible, for drop-in and sibling care. Staffing is a delicate balance and is based directly on the number of students present for extended day services.

The Extended Day Program operates most of the year. Fees are published envisioning children who routinely need before- or after-school care, and will have reserved places, as well as drop-ins on a space-available basis. "Rainbow Days" fees are not included in the Extended Day single payment plans.

The Extended Day program is available free of charge for parents who are having conferences, substituting, or working on school business during business hours; however, they will need to inform the Extended Day Director that their child will be present and request a voucher. *These vouchers will need to be submitted to the office for proper credit.*



Summer Program

The full summer enrichment program integrates mathematics, language, geography, literature, guest presenters, outdoor activities, arts, crafts, field trips, music, drama, gardening, and other special interests focusing on a different country each week. The school may also host special week-long camps. The administration and staff will provide a variety of planned activities for summer, as well as free play time each day, and swimming at the Kershaw County Recreation Center pool next door.



Transition

Children at MSC transition from one classroom level to another as they demonstrate readiness for the subsequent program. This transition can occur throughout the year, but especially from Infant to Toddler and from Toddler to Primary and Primary All Day. Because of the quantum change from Primary to

Lower Elementary students rarely transition from one to the other during the school year.

Children transferring from other Montessori programs may be admitted to the Elementary classes if space is available. Other children who have completed Kindergarten must undergo a formal assessment to ensure that they have developed the necessary Montessori characteristics and be accepted by the classroom director. The prospective classroom director will complete an assessment form and report observations to the headmaster before making a recommendation for acceptance.

In general, a child may move to an older class when he demonstrates readiness. The school policies outline some academic indicators of that preparedness. A child should also be physically, emotionally, and socially mature enough to integrate into the older group. Classroom directors weigh these factors into recommendations for transition.

Children will generally transition at the conclusion of a 3-year period in each class (except Infant and Toddler students). The Headmaster will make the final decision regarding all recommendations for transition, after consultation with Classroom Directors and parents.

For mid-year transition, when a Classroom Director believes that a student is ready to move to the next level, she advises the Headmaster and consults the gaining Classroom Director. With parent permission, the student visits her new surroundings until she is acclimated.



Assessment

Assessment is the hourly, daily, and weekly appraisal of student progress at MSC. Early in their educational career at the school, students learn self-assessment from the prepared environment of self-correcting materials and the example provided by the adults. As students will not have a teacher, mentor, or guide looking over their shoulders following their schooling, self-assessment and self-correction are important lifelong skills that students acquire from the earliest years in a Montessori environment. Additionally, students learn from their earliest years that their learning is a partnership with their teachers. Adults and students establish and agree upon daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Classroom Directors maintain written records of work presented and mastered, and each child has a “lesson plan” against which his/her progress is measured as he/she moves through the day and week. A Montessori guide thus knows at any given instant precisely where a child is academically, developmentally, socially, and emotionally. With frequent one-on-one work and constant individual, personalized assessment of student work by the Classroom Director, issues and concerns emerge and are addressed quickly. Constant fine-tuning and periodic adjustment maximize all dimensions of their progress and assure intellectual engagement for each child. In such a highly structured program, parents are alerted quickly to any concerns rather than waiting for “report card periods” or “term-end grades”. In this manner, performance and

progress, not grades, become the focus of assessment and the heart of any discussion about the child. The newly adopted “Developmental Continua” assist in seeing progress not only at a given lesson or even a single year, but across the entire experience of the child at MSC.



School Calendar

The school calendar, which includes all school holidays and teacher in-service days, is published and provided to parents at the beginning of school. Our web site, www.montessori-camden.com, also has our calendar, which includes all the major school events.



Visitors to the School

All visitors who are not listed on the Enrollment Record form must sign-in at the office at Bossong Hall and receive a visitor pass before entering any building or classroom.



Staff

The school administration has the overall responsibility for day-to-day operation. The Classroom Directors (teachers) are responsible for the success of the classroom, including individualized planning for each child. The Extended Day staff provides support to the instructional day by offering supervised homework time and other appropriate planned activities.



Admission

Our school welcomes any child from six weeks through five years of age who exhibits readiness for the Montessori program and whose parents are willing and able to follow school policies and provide a continuity of experience at home for that child. It is important that each child has the opportunity for an initial interview before admission to MSC. This informal interview not only allows the school to ascertain the child’s readiness, but also gives the child the opportunity to become acquainted with the new surroundings and receive a personal orientation. This initial conference may be in addition to regularly scheduled conferences, depending upon the child’s entry date (see “Conferences”, below). Children may be admitted into the Elementary classes, but only after completing the **MSC**

Application for Enrollment and undergoing a more thorough interview process to determine if the child has developed academic and social skills and emotional readiness necessary for successful transition into a Montessori classroom. This requirement may be waived for elementary-age children coming from other authentic Montessori schools.

Children will not normally be re-admitted once they have left the school to attend a different institution.

Other Admissions Requirements

✓ When space is unavailable at the time of application, children may be placed on a waiting list. A deposit and new student registration fee is required to guarantee a child's place on the list. If the parents withdraw the application for their child before the school has offered a place the deposit will be returned. **The New Student Registration Fee and Assessment Fee are not refundable.** If the child is offered a place in the school and the parents decline, the deposit will not be refunded.

✓ Education for all children, including those with special needs, will be provided within the parameters of the Montessori philosophy and its implementation in the classroom (see Children with Special Needs, below).

✓ In keeping with our goal of serving the best interest of all children, all admissions are on a **six-week trial basis**. MSC has the right to deny temporary and/or permanent admission if the school feels it is not in the best interest of the child or the school.



Children with Special Needs

In the event that a student appears to have a learning difference, different learning needs, or recurring emotional, medical, behavioral, or disciplinary problems, the school will contact the child's family to communicate concerns in a timely, sensitive, and thoughtful manner. Children with mild physical, mental, or educational difficulties are considered for admission when their needs can be met within the context of the program. Initial and/or periodic assessment by qualified professionals may be required. After a teacher/administration/parent conference, the school will make the final decision of whether continuation in the MSC program or transitioning into another environment would be in the best interest of the child. While the school works to respond to each child's academic, behavioral, and emotional needs, it may lack the staff and expertise to develop appropriate learning strategies for children with special learning needs or differences. All parents, including parents of children with special needs, should be aware that a child may be able to function in one environment and at a particular phase of development, but this does not presume MSC will be able to offer the structure,

assistance, and supervision necessary for the optimal growth of the child in the next class. If a facilitator is required for a special needs child, the facilitator must meet all of the requirements of an MSC staff member and will be under the direction of the Classroom Director(s) and the Headmaster in conjunction with the parents of the child with special needs.

MSC makes every effort to support assessment of students with special needs by public schools, and makes space available on campus for mediation by public school therapists.



Class Placement

The Headmaster makes all class placements with the advice and counsel of the Director of Education and the Classroom Directors. In an effort to create a model educational environment true to the philosophy of Dr. Montessori, a relatively even distribution by gender and age is critical to the success of each three-year developmental cycle in which the students are grouped. The Headmaster thus reserves the right to select and place children for admission on the basis of their age, gender and/or current academic level. Generally, children will remain with their classroom teacher and/or classroom until they are ready for placement in the next level appropriate to their educational, emotional, and social needs unless the Headmaster feels a change is in the best interest of the child or class. Classroom Directors will notify families of their child's class placement prior to the child beginning school.



Registration

Each student must have the following forms on file in the administration office before the child's start date:

- ✓ Enrollment Contract
- ✓ Fee Schedule Worksheet
- ✓ Enrollment Record
- ✓ General Authorization Form
- ✓ Acknowledgement Form
- ✓ DHEC Form 1148, Certificate of Immunization
- ✓ DSS form 2900

These forms must be renewed each school year. Many are available in the admissions section of the MSC web site.



Financial Responsibilities

A nonrefundable New Student Fee of \$100 is payable upon initial enrollment. Payment of an enrollment deposit (refundable if space is not available) reserves a child's place in the school. Parents may choose among three methods of tuition payment. Parents may choose to pay the deposit at the time the child's application is accepted and the balance on August 1st or the first day of attendance if entering after the start of school. Alternately, parents may choose a semi-annual or monthly payment plan offered in the Fee Schedule Worksheet. Tuition is based upon the academic year. Academic fees are due according to the payment plan selected by the parent.

Regular Extended Day charges will be invoiced monthly and are due upon receipt. Several one-rate plans for regular Extended Day care are also available. They can be included in the payment plan with tuition.

"Rainbow" Day care is available most non-school weekdays with advanced notice of enrollment. Rates for children with reserved spaces, as well as space-available drop-ins, are published with the Rainbow Days sign-up sheet. Rainbow Day charges may be paid at the time of registration or included in monthly statements.

Summer program fees will be announced well before the beginning of the summer program. Parents may elect a whole summer plan or weekly plan that is payable in two installments during the summer program. Summer program fees will be billed in advance.

If a child is well enough to come to school, but parents do not wish him to participate in scheduled activities (outside or a trip), MSC will attempt to arrange indoor care for a charge of \$6.00 per hour. Twenty-four hour advance notice is required.

Students will not be readmitted to school unless accounts are current. A \$30.00 fee is charged for returned checks. Fees and/or policies may be revised upon written notification to parents. Withdrawal or dismissal does not eliminate the contractual obligation of the enrollment contract. No refunds are paid except as afforded by the MSC Tuition Insurance Plan. If a student withdraws, all financial obligations must be met **before** school records will be released to the parents or other educational institutions. **Late fees** are assessed in accordance with the Accounts in Arrears and Late Fees Policies (explained in the enrollment contract).

Optional Fees

A list of optional fees appears on the Fee Schedule Worksheet. Parents may choose to purchase sleep mats, a large Ziploc bag for sleep items, a one-time annual fee for pizza Friday, a one-time annual fee for Extended Day, logo items, and a donation to the Parent Advisory Council. Children enrolled in the morning program and who elect to stay for pizza on Friday will be charged the standard Extended Day fee according to the time they remain after dismissal.



Developing Responsibility

Children occasionally break items in the classroom, but sometimes they also *decide* to break something. In the latter case, replacing the broken item is an opportunity to help a child learn the consequences of his actions and allows him/her to take responsibility rather than punishment. Should this occur, the Classroom Director will send home a note asking the parent to help the child replace the broken item. Taking your child to the store and taking great care to find just the right replacement can help your child understand the consequences of his actions. Montessori materials not normally available in stores can be obtained using catalogues available in the office.



Student Records

Student records are **confidential**. Access to those records is limited to the child's Classroom Director and administration. Parents of the child and designated representatives of the State Department of Education, DHEC, DSS, and the Division of Child Development will also have access to the records. No other person will have access to the records without the written consent of the parents or legal guardians. Requests by the parents or guardians for information retained in these files, or copies of these files, will be addressed in writing to the Headmaster. Requests for transfer of student records shall be addressed to the Headmaster. The school has the right to withhold the transfer of academic records until all tuition and fees have been paid (see "Financial Responsibilities", above).



Outdoor Time

Outside activities are important for a child's physical development, socialization, and recreation. Children spend time outside each day by class. Toddler children, depending on their energy level, may spend much of their day in their outdoor environment. Primary morning children usually go outside from 11:15 to 11:45am. The Lower Elementary class goes out about 12:30pm while the Upper Elementary class has recreation time on the playground or soccer field near the end of the day. The outdoor environment is part of the curriculum throughout the day. Outside activities include age-appropriate activities from climbing on one of the jungle gyms to ball games or races. Inclement weather decisions are made by the Classroom Directors.

Children need to be well enough to participate in these activities. Because all the classroom staff supervises the playground, no one is available to remain with a child inside. Children unable to participate in these activities should remain

at home for the day unless indoor care has been contracted in advance (\$6.00 per hour).



Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of our school curriculum and extend the capabilities of the school to enrich students' experiences beyond the walls of the institution. Classroom Directors will usually notify parents of upcoming field trips several weeks in advance. Class field trips are age appropriate educational experiences. The volunteer drivers act as chaperones for the students helping to ensure a positive experience for all. It is in the best interest of the students in the class that chaperones focus their full attention on the children in their care. For these reasons, we request that parents do **not** bring along younger or older siblings. All children will be transported in privately owned vehicles. Forward-facing safety devices, provided by parents, must be used for all children between ages one and six years who weigh between 20 and 40 lbs. Children in this age group weighing between 40 and 80 lbs. must be secured by a belt-positioning booster seat. These requirements all conform to South Carolina State Law.

Each year Upper Elementary students attend an environmental education camp program. This valuable experience, usually a three-day-two-night stay, is an important component of the life science's curriculum.



Discipline

At The Montessori School of Camden, people have the right to work in a non-threatening, safe, pleasant environment. The children are free to work and to choose activities so long as that freedom does not infringe upon the rights of others and does no harm to themselves, others, or the environment. Children are expected to conduct themselves responsibly within the context of their developmental level. Adults help children develop strategies to control their own behavior, to settle disagreements without physical or verbal abuse, and to respect others. Those whose behavior is unacceptable are asked to remove themselves from the activities until they choose to accept the rules. Since the children are considered responsible for their actions, the staff members are always available to assist them in achieving self-control. In an extreme or persistent case of inappropriate behavior, parents will be notified. The notice will include circumstances of the incident, the actions taken in the classroom to resolve matters, and the actions taken by the administrative staff. Staff members, parents, and children work together to achieve acceptable levels of behavior and performance. Referral services for counseling and other means of assistance are available upon request. Obviously, **corporal punishment is not used at MSC**. The school reserves the right to dismiss students who fail to

show reasonable improvement in problem behaviors identified through staff, parent, and/or professional counseling.



Withdrawal and Dismissal

From the first day at school, both children and parents agree to support all rules of the school as outlined in the *Parent Handbook* and/or in other communications to families while the students are enrolled at MSC. If the school is unable to respond to a child's academic, social, and/or emotional needs, it reserves the right to require a change of environment to ensure the student's success and well-being. If, in the judgment of the child's Classroom Director and the Headmaster, it is not in the best interest of the child or the school for the child to continue attending the school, withdrawal from the school may be the only alternative. If a situation arises, some or all of the following procedures will be used:

- ✓ The Classroom Director will request a conference with the parent of the child.
- ✓ If the situation continues, the Headmaster or Director of Education will observe the child and assist the Classroom Director with the situation.
- ✓ The Headmaster and Classroom Director will meet with the child's parents and discuss the situation.
- ✓ The school will request a full professional evaluation of the child within a specific time period.
- ✓ In case of a behavioral or disciplinary problem, the parents may be asked to keep the child at home for a period of time determined by the Headmaster.
- ✓ If, in the judgment of the Classroom Director, the Headmaster, and the Board of Directors the child cannot be accommodated within the realm of the school and its philosophy, the parents will be asked to withdraw the child from the school.

The unused portion of paid tuition will be refunded in accordance with the financial policy of the school, only as afforded by the MSC Tuition Insurance Plan.



Suspension of Children

Some activities will not be accepted or tolerated by MSC. Suspension is an option when behavior is dangerous or aggressive. At a minimum, the list includes:

1. Drugs on school grounds.

2. Weapons on school grounds. A student who possesses a firearm must be suspended from school for at least 365 days (one year).
3. Threatening another student or staff with bodily harm or death.
4. Purposeful behavior that endangers the safety of others.
5. Vandalizing or maliciously destroying school property or grounds.
6. Persistent and willful violation of school policies and rules.
7. Aggressive and dangerous behavior.
8. Profanity or lewd language.

If the Headmaster becomes aware of any such incident, the following course of action will be taken:

1. The Headmaster will notify the President of the Board of Directors of the allegation.
2. The Headmaster will investigate the allegation.
3. The Headmaster will then make a determination of action to be taken.
4. If the Headmaster believes withdrawal from the school is appropriate, he will notify the Board of Directors of the action before dismissing a student.



Medical

Health Records

A South Carolina certificate of immunization is required by law upon enrollment and may be obtained from a family physician or DHEC. Section 44-29-180 of South Carolina State Law requires that all children under six years of age present a current South Carolina Certificate of Immunization (DHEC Form 1148) certifying immunization against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, German measles, mumps, and hepatitis B. Additionally, Regulation 61-8, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control specifies similar requirements for vaccinations, screening, and immunizations for children to enroll in kindergarten through 12th grade. Children born after January 1, 1999 who have not had clinical or serological evidence of the disease are also required to be vaccinated against varicella.

State requirements are subject to change each year. The school office has current specific information on dosages for each age group. All health records and forms must be completed at the time of the student's entry. These records and forms are kept in the school office and must be updated **annually** or at any time there is a change.

Illness

Children with fever, symptoms of respiratory, gastrointestinal or other sicknesses should remain at home until they are symptom and fever-free for

twenty-four hours to decrease the likelihood of spreading an infection. A child who exhibits signs of illness will be isolated. The parents or other previously authorized person will be called to pick up the sick child immediately. No child can be released to anyone not listed on the Pick-up List without permission.

Communicable Disease

Control of communicable illness among the children is a prime concern. Policies and guidelines related to outbreaks of communicable illness have been developed with the help of medical authorities. In order to protect the school and each student, we ask that parents assist us by keeping sick children at home if they have experienced any of the following symptoms within the **last 24 hours**:

- ❖ A fever of 100°F (37.8°C) orally or 99°F (37.2°C) axillary (under the arm).
- ❖ Signs of a newly developed cold or uncontrollable coughing.
- ❖ Diarrhea, vomiting, or an upset stomach.
- ❖ Unusual or unexplained loss of appetite, fatigue, irritability, or headache.
- ❖ Any discharge or drainage from the eyes, ears, or open sores (children with appropriately bandaged sores may attend school).

In addition, any child diagnosed with a communicable disease may return to school only with a doctor's note confirming that the disease is no longer contagious.

The school office should be notified as soon as possible of contraction of any communicable disease. MSC will notify parents of any DHEC reportable, communicable diseases within the classroom or school, as applicable.

Medication

A school form, "Administration of Specific Medication," must be completed in order for staff members to administer medication to children who require it. This form is available on the admissions page of the school website, at www.montessori-camden.com. Medication must be clearly labeled and in its **original container**. The staff member who administers medication will fill in and initial the Medication Record, which is available for parents to review. **Hand medications and forms directly to a member of the MSC office staff.** Placing it in your child's lunchbox may result in the instructions being lost and not carried out, as well as opening the possibility of children sharing medications. Cough drops are treated as medications for the purpose of these instructions.

Emergency Procedures

In case of emergency, the parents or other authorized person will be contacted for instructions. If no emergency instructions can be obtained, the staff member will notify Emergency Medical Services for the child to be transported by ambulance or authorized private vehicle to Kershaw County Medical Center, and the instructions and recommendations of the attending physician will be followed. Medical conditions requiring evacuation include, but are not limited to loss of

consciousness, breathing difficulties, severe bleeding, unequal pupils, seizure, neck or back injury, continuous clear drainage from nose/ears after a blow to the head, severe headache, stiff neck or pain when head is moved, hives that appear quickly, very sick child who seems to be getting worse quickly, vomiting blood, severe abdominal pain that causes a child to double over, abdominal pain after a blow to the abdomen, possible broken bones, or shock. The Enrollment Form and a faculty member must accompany the child if transported by means other than the parent.

A member of the office staff will replace the faculty member until a substitute can arrive.

In case of accident or illness the first adult on the scene will administer First Aid within the limits of her training. Further emergency procedures (as outlined above) will be initiated in cases when the child's condition cannot be remedied by elementary first aid. The Headmaster will be notified immediately if possible, but notification of the office shall not delay calling parents or EMS.

The Classroom Director (rather than the office staff) should call parents in case of accident, as parents may have specific questions about the events leading to it that the office staff may not be able to answer.



Insurance

MSC carries insurance policies for loss or damage to the property, liability, and to cover Directors and Officers.



Reporting Child Abuse

The school is required by state law to report any known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services.



Inclement Weather Closings and Delays

Parents and faculty members of MSC do not face the obstacles created by inclement weather encountered by parents of children enrolled in the public school system. Because students at MSC work at their own pace, the loss of a day by one student does not disconnect him from the place of his peers. As a result, **the closure of Kershaw County schools does not normally mean the closure of the Montessori school.** Unless MSC announces closure in the media, each parent can make a reasonable assessment of the situation and determine whether to bring a child to school or not. The Headmaster has access to the information available to the Kershaw County School District, and will make a closure decision by 6a.m. When bad conditions may present a hazard, parents should stay tuned to the local

radio station (FM 102.7), and check WIS-TV, the school answering machine, or the school web site, www.montessori-camden.com. Additionally, MSC may opt to close due to the dangers of tornadoes spawned when there is an approaching hurricane. “Approaching Hurricane Related Tornado Emergencies” occur when approaching weather conditions, associated with a hurricane, result in a number of South Carolina counties (whether or not including Kershaw) having publicly declared Tornado Watches. Parents may be encouraged, even expected, to collect children in the event of a declared Tornado Watch or Warning during the school day, should they be able and willing to do so. Classes meanwhile should continue as normal.



Arrival and Dismissal

MSC is open Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Please maintain prompt arrivals and departures.

Staff members sign students in and out of school.

Arrival between 8:00 a.m. and 8:20 a.m. will ensure maximum benefit from classroom time. It also allows the child to adapt mentally from home environment to school at the same time as her classmates. Late arrivals frequently feel rushed to “catch up” or disconnected from the day, which reduces their own concentration and disturbs other children. This is true even of toddlers.

All children arriving before 8:00 a.m. will be dropped off at Beard Hall for morning Extended Day. At 8:00 a.m., children assigned to classes in Bossong or Primary Hall will be escorted there by a staff member.

When arriving before 8:20 a.m. at either building, parents are asked to remain in their cars and our “greeter” will assist the students from their cars and direct them to the classrooms. We find that this method of separation decreases anxiety for both parents and younger children. However, sometimes a child (or parent) may suffer separation anxiety. The best remedy is for the parent to make a calm, pleasant, and prompt exit, leaving the child in the care of a reassuring staff member. If this anxiety manifests itself at home and not at school, the Classroom Directors and Headmaster should be informed. Children who arrive **after 8:20 a.m.** must be escorted to their classroom door by the person who brought them to school.

For departures at 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., parents should remain in their cars and a staff member will walk the child to the car and place him or her in a car seat or seat belt. **A \$1.00 per minute late fee will be charged for the time a child remains at the school after 6:00 p.m.**

The staff is permitted to release a child to a parent or other designated adult only if the vehicle has a **restraint system** in their vehicle as required by South Carolina State Law, Article 47, Chapter 5 of Title 56, Section 56-5-6410.

Because parking is limited in the lot, traffic can become congested easily. Parents who need to escort their children into the building or meet with staff are

requested to park in the spaces across from the buildings' entrances. Please do not leave your car unattended in the pick-up line.

Parents should include on their children's Enrollment Record all possible persons whom they authorize to pick up their children. Special limitations to the pick-up list should be supported with copies of legal documents in the office, as necessary. Please stop by the office to make changes to your children's record and allow twenty-four hours to ensure that changes to the authorized pick-up list are available to all staff. In emergency situations you may give one-time permission for your child to leave school with an adult not on the pick-up list. All adults not known to the staff will be required to show photo identification before picking up children.

Infant Arrival and Dismissal

Parents must bring infants to the classroom, and retrieve them there as well. Please park in one of the spaces provided at Beard Hall to permit other parents to have access to the drop-off point.

Movement During the School Day

Each member of the staff maintains positive control over all children in her care, will know the number of children under her care, and will have access to either a Transition Roster, the Attendance Roster or the Enrollment Record.

The Headmaster has overall responsibility that all children are safely and properly supervised by members of the staff at all times.

Classroom Directors record time of arrival, transition from Early Morning Extended Day, time of departure, and transition to Extended Day on the Classroom Attendance Roster every day. They then place completed Classroom Attendance Rosters in the Extended Day box at the end of each week.

The Extended Day Director records the time of departure of all children when picked up on the Master Attendance Sheet, collates ED departure times on Classroom Attendance Rosters for all classes and sends them to the office by Tuesday of the following week.

The Summer Program Director adapts the transition procedures as described in paragraph 4f.

Transition times are more sensitive because the children have a greater likelihood to be overlooked when everyone is in motion. All children at MSC will be under the supervision of a member of the staff at all times. When children transition from one staff member to another the former will transmit any pertinent information about that child at the bottom of the applicable transition form. For transitions from Early Morning Extended Day to the classroom and from the classroom to the nap room the names of all children making the transition will be recorded and given to the gaining staff member.



Attendance

Consistent attendance is very important for proper progress through the curriculum. Please plan your vacations during the summer or other vacation periods listed in the annual calendar.



Personal Belongings and Clothing

Children should wear comfortable clothing appropriate for both indoor and outdoor activities. In the interest of safety, jewelry, open-toed shoes, high heels, flip-flops, backless sandals or boots may not be worn to school. To foster independence, parents are encouraged to purchase clothing that the children can easily manipulate. Infant, Toddler and Primary children must keep a complete change of clothing on hand at school for spills and other emergencies. These clothes, as well as those worn to school, should be labeled. Students may bring books, science specimens, and other items of educational interest to the class. Since Montessori materials are designed to attract children to specific lessons at the most appropriate age, toys brought from home would be a distraction in the classroom. We will safeguard toys inadvertently brought to school until the end of the school day.

It is not unusual for parents occasionally to find tiny cubes, puzzle pieces, beads, or other items in pockets, cuffs, or book bags. These items should be returned to the school promptly as they are components of Montessori materials. Every effort is made to provide equipment and maintain an environment that is always ready for learning.



School Store

A great way to show school spirit! The MSC Store offers a variety of school logo items to choose, ranging from Polo shirts to T's, hats, license plates, coffee mugs, visors, etc. We also have older Family Recipe cookbooks and tote bags. School store items can be purchased through the website or print the shopping cart page and bring it to the office with your payment. All items purchased must be picked up at the school.



Birthdays

The moment of birth, which is the beginning of your child's own time line, is of great importance to him/her. The "celebration of life" begins by gathering the children together as a family. We honor the birthday child by telling a story of how

he/she was born, lived as an infant, learned to sit, crawl, walk, etc. As we tell the story of your child's life, he/she walks slowly around a candle—one time around for each year of your child's life. The candle represents the sun around which the child has circled while on earth. On this special day, please send to school one photo for each year of your child's life, as well as some important events in your child's life at one year, two years, at three years, etc... (pictures will be returned). This is a beautiful celebration of life, not a party, so no food or special favor is necessary. Parents and grandparents are welcome to attend the "celebration of life ceremony" for their child. At home, your child may receive many gifts on his/her birthday. One way for your child to express his/her love and thankfulness on this special day is to bring a gift for the class—even something as simple as a book, cut flowers, or a plant can be joyously given. A small, useful item such as a vase, dish, pitcher, tray, bowl, jar, or basket can be found easily in a garage sale or flea market. If the gift is marked as being made in another country, it will support for our cultural studies as well! Consult with your child's Classroom Director for suggestions and authorizations. In the interest of protecting the feelings of the children, party invitations will not be distributed at school. Please mail them or personally deliver them to the parents of the children invited.



Lunch

Parents should provide healthy, nutritious lunches for their children. These foods should not require refrigeration or warming. At least one item from each of the following categories should be included:

- ✓ Meat, poultry, eggs, peanut butter, or other protein
- ✓ Two vegetables, or one vegetable and one fruit, or two fruits
- ✓ Cereal or whole grain enriched products
- ✓ Dairy products that do not require refrigeration

Candy and food items containing caffeine should be avoided.

Children are encouraged to be self-sufficient during lunch times. Proper social skills are modeled and encouraged. Children are encouraged to eat—or at least taste—each food provided. The school provides emergency lunches (at a nominal fee) for children who forget their lunches or who participate in the Extended Day Program unexpectedly. Lunch boxes should be labeled. Children will not be permitted to share food items to control for food allergies.

Many classrooms have a microwave, and children will be permitted to warm food according to their mastery of the lesson in its use.

On Friday's during the school year pizza is delivered to the school for the children. Parents may elect to have their child participate in "Pizza Friday" for the entire year on the Fee Schedule Worksheet under "Optional Fees". If Friday is not a school day, pizza will be served on the previous Thursday, but will be cancelled if Thursday is also not a school day.



Snacks

Healthy snacks are provided each day by the parents on a rotating basis and are available throughout the morning. Snacks should not be “junk food” with excessive sugar or fat. Parents also provide the mid-afternoon Extended Day snacks for their own children in their lunch boxes. Since snack consumption is optional, children may choose whether or not to serve themselves snacks. The Upper Elementary students enjoy mid-morning snack during silent reading time. Further information is available from the various Classroom Directors.



Naps and Rest Periods

Toddler and Primary children rest on mats that can be purchased through the school. After being settled on their mats, children who have not fallen asleep within a reasonable amount of time may put their mats away and begin their afternoon work. Children are encouraged to bring clearly labeled blankets that are taken home at least weekly for laundering. Favorite “snuggle buddies” are allowed if desired. With storage space being limited, please provide a small pillow and a lightweight blanket. All nap items should be stored inside a large Ziploc bag that can be closed securely. Nap mats and Ziploc bags are available in the office for a small fee.



Toilet Training

Parents of children in toilet training are requested to use underwear rather than pull-ups. In our experience, underwear works as well as pull-ups for the training purpose. They are less expensive for parents and make possible the management of numerous children at this important phase of their development.



Lost and Found

Please check with the Extended Day Director or Office if your child is missing an article of clothing. Unclaimed lost and found items will be donated to charity once each semester. If a found item is labeled with your child’s name, we will send it home with your child.



Incident Reports

If a child is hurt, hurts another child, or is significantly upset during the day, the witnessing staff member will fill out an Incident Report. The Headmaster initials all reports. If the incident is serious, parents will be notified immediately in accordance with our emergency policy. A staff member may apply simple first aid at the facility for an injury or illness needing only minimal attention, such as minor cuts, abrasions, bruises, and insect bites. All staff members are required to protect themselves against the risk of exposure to blood-borne pathogens. Staff members use gloves and other protective measures as they deal with blood and other body fluids.



Parent Participation

The success of the child in the classroom relies heavily on the interaction between the parent and the school. Our “Open Door” policy welcomes parents who have questions and concerns or who simply want to learn more about the Montessori philosophy. We encourage parents to participate in the classroom and school activities. We have outlined below ways in which parents can help in establishing a positive school experience for their child.



Conferences

Two or three parent conferences are scheduled each academic year. In addition, parents are invited to seek consultation with the staff and/or Headmaster at other times during the year by scheduling a conference with the Classroom Director directly or through the school office.



Parent Education

All parents are encouraged to attend the Parent Education Program that will be scheduled throughout the year. This program is essential to understanding your child’s daily routine and the school’s policies. It also gives the parents an opportunity to ask questions and be introduced to the faculty and other Montessori parents. Finally, the Parent Education Program gives parents more sensitivity to the advantages of the Montessori Method, allowing them to reinforce Montessori lessons and principles at home. Parents completing the series of workshops receive a certificate of completion and annual tuition credit.



Observation

Parents and visitors are welcome to observe the children at school providing that observation does not disrupt the children's activities. It is desirable to observe a class before enrolling a child, if possible. Parents are asked to allow at least **six weeks** adjustment time before observing newly enrolled students to be able to appreciate the "normalization" process. To avoid over-crowding in the classrooms, appointments to observe are preferred. Observation appointments to enhance your understanding and minimize disruption in the classroom may be scheduled by calling the school office. Written guidelines are available in the office to assist with your observation. Webcams in all classrooms also allow parents to view activities via the internet, avoiding the disadvantage of the parent's presence being a distraction to the child. Access to the webcam is permitted only to parents of children in that classroom, and is protected by a series of passwords issued only to parents, and only by hand from the Classroom Director. Approval of all parents in the class is required to activate the camera in each classroom.



Parents' Advisory Council (PAC)

The PAC serves as a liaison between parents and school officials at both the classroom and school levels. PAC members speak for the parents they represent—parent representatives are volunteers of their class and the President represents the parents of the school.

The Headmaster works closely with the President of PAC, seeking parent ideas, input, and assistance for programs.

Classroom Directors work with their classroom representatives. They may assist in various ways, including organizing field trip drivers and special projects, and relaying questions or concerns from the classroom's parents to the Classroom Director.

PAC helps organize school activities at both the classroom and school levels. The Development Committee asks the PAC President for volunteers for all-school fundraising activities.

Expectations: What You as a Parent Can Expect from MSC:

- ❖ A safe, loving and secure environment to help the children develop into self-confident, happy adults at peace with themselves and each other.
- ❖ Faculty and staff who live by the stated philosophies of the school and Dr. Maria Montessori.
- ❖ Realistic goals for your child.
- ❖ Care and respect for your child as an individual who progresses at his/her own pace.
- ❖ Information about your child's progress and advice when appropriate.

- ❖ An open invitation to become part of the Montessori family.
- ❖ Appreciation of your point of view.
- ❖ Positive thinking and professionalism.
- ❖ A prepared environment that gives your child the opportunity to cultivate curiosity and interest in a wide range of fields that are arranged in an orderly and neat fashion that is easily accessible to the child.

Expectations: What MSC Can Expect from You as a Parent:

- ❖ Attendance at meetings, orientations, and conferences.
- ❖ Acceptance of the Montessori philosophy and adherence to the guidelines of the *Parent Handbook*.
- ❖ Communication concerning situations which may affect your child's school performance.
- ❖ Early communication to the teacher of problems or concerns.
- ❖ Setting realistic goals for your child and observing the classroom voluntarily at least once per year.
- ❖ Involvement in parent volunteer activities and other projects to support the school.
- ❖ Prompt response to tuition and paperwork obligations.
- ❖ A positive attitude towards the school and philosophy you have chosen for your child.



Some Points to Remember

Dr. Montessori reminded the adults who are responsible for children of the following:

- ❖ Each child matures and develops at a rate different from that of others—and the rate changes over time; therefore, comparing children of the same age does not produce useful information but can lead to anxiety.
- ❖ At school, the children are encouraged rather than pushed. The same should occur at home.
- ❖ Provide sensible, flexible rules and limits that your child can accept and follow easily. This gives your child a sense of security in his/her environment and in his/her relationship with others.
- ❖ Do not do anything for your child that he/she can do for him/herself.
- ❖ Demonstrate each activity to your child in a slow, simple manner with as few words as possible and let him/her try the task. Give time for practice; let your child use real objects. Your child prefers to use the objects he/she sees adults handling.
- ❖ Only touch a child when invited to do so.
- ❖ Never speak ill of the child in his presence—or absence.

- ❖ Concentrate on strengthening and helping the development of what is good in the child so that its presence may leave less and less space for the inappropriate.
- ❖ Be active in preparing the environment. Take meticulous and constant care of it. Help the child establish constructive relations with it.
- ❖ Be ever ready to answer the call of the child who needs you.
- ❖ Respect the child who makes a mistake and can (then or later) correct it.
- ❖ Stop firmly and immediately any misuse of the environment and any action which endangers the child, his development, or that of others.
- ❖ Respect the child who takes rest or watches others working or ponders over what he has done or will do. Neither call him nor force him to other forms of activity.
- ❖ Treat the child with the best of good manners and offer her the best you have yourself and at your disposal.



Extending Montessori in the Home

We hope that this will give you some ideas for ways to implement the Montessori philosophy in an environment other than the school. Each home is and should be a unique place for a very special group of people, not a substitute school. The following are suggestions for activities from which you can choose those most appropriate to fit your own lifestyle.

- ❖ Provide your child with his/her own work area with a table and a few sturdy objects with which to work. Introduce each new activity slowly and simply. Allow enough time for the children to become familiar with that activity before introducing another.
- ❖ Arrange your child's room neatly and simply. Have shelves for toys and display only enough toys at a time that can be displayed neatly. Rotate items from time to time.
- ❖ Have child-sized furniture in the child's areas, low hooks and rods for clothes, and a light switch within reach.
- ❖ Allocate space for your child's own belongings and mark it in a recognizable way.
- ❖ Provide the child's own accessible cleaning materials: dustpan and brush, sponge, cloth, etc.
- ❖ Have mirrors placed at the child's eye level. Give your child the possibility to see outside through a window.
- ❖ Help your child learn the names of all objects in the home environment.
- ❖ Allow your child to do some of the following practical life activities:

Pour beverages at mealtime
Wash fruits and vegetables

Water plants and flowers
Wash or rinse mealtime dishes

Fold and sort laundry
Wash the table after meals
Set or clear the table
Clean mirrors or windows
Dust furniture or floors
Polish brass, silver, furniture or shoes
Weed the garden
Sweep
Rake leaves
Care for animals
Brush/comb hair
Put away own clothing
Dress and undress with little assistance

Choose own clothing for the day
Brush teeth
Wash hands
Shake hands for greeting
Place own order at a restaurant
Offer something to a guest
Use the telephone courteously
Make own bed
Pick up own room
Prepare simple foods
Help unload groceries and sort them

- ❖ Statistics suggest that the average preschooler watches twenty-three hours of television a week and the average American family watches seven hours a day. Find ways to limit, monitor, and select your child's viewing. Studies at the Harvard Graduate School of Education show that heavy television viewing adversely affects the development of a child's language skills. Further, they suggest that children who are heavy viewers score, on average, fifteen points lower on standardized testing. They are less imaginative, more aggressive, and do not sleep as well as children who have been read to before going to sleep.
- ❖ The computer also presents a risk to children. Please find ways to limit, monitor, and control your child's use of the computer. With the increased presence of computers and on-line services in most homes, "screen time" (television and computer) can quickly comprise the bulk of a free child's time at home.

A more detailed discussion of ways to implement the Montessori philosophy in your home can be found in John Moncure, "Extending Montessori in the Home," in *Tomorrow's Child* (March 2009).



Problem-solving Procedures

Cooperation between the school and home is essential to assure a happy and successful school experience for the children. Open and honest communication is a must for achieving cooperation. When problems do arise, individuals are encouraged to resolve the issues among the involved parties. If resolution is not accomplished, the issues should be brought to the attention of the Headmaster. If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily, the individuals involved should ask to be placed on the agenda for the next Board of Directors meeting so that the Board might attempt to bring resolution to the matters. Following these problem-solving procedures will facilitate the spirit of cooperation throughout the school community.

NON-DISCRIMINATION:

The Montessori School of Camden does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, or national origin in its educational programs or in its employment practices. Questions pertaining to Title IX or Section 504 may be directed to the Headmaster at 432-6828.