



**Montessori Parent Handbook
and
Registration Information**

Mission Statement

The mission of Mesa Public Schools Montessori program is to provide quality Montessori education for students. Our program fosters an educationally enriched, peaceful community that is ideal for students who are independent learners, intrinsically motivated, and responsible. Mesa Public Schools Montessori programs are members of the American Montessori Society.

The Montessori Method

The Montessori approach is an educational philosophy and methodology of instruction. It was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early 1900's and is based on her observations of children throughout the world

What Makes Montessori Unique?

- Montessori classrooms are usually multi-grade classrooms. These classrooms allow teachers to develop close and long-term relationships with their students. This also encourages older students to become role models, mentors, and leaders to younger students.
- Curriculum is customized based on student's interests, achievement levels, and progress. Hands-on learning is central to the curriculum and leads to students being actively engaged.
- Integrated curriculum is carefully structured and connects across the subjects. Students move in sequence from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract.
- Students make choices in directing their own work. Independence is nurtured and leads students to becoming purposeful, motivated, and confident in their abilities.
- The classroom setting emphasizes a balance between freedom and responsibility. This reflects a Montessori cornerstone — respect for self, each other, and the student's environment.

Curriculum and Instruction in the Montessori Classroom

The Montessori curriculum is aligned to the Arizona Standards and serves as a framework for instruction. Montessori instruction is student-centered, differentiated, and guided through teacher observation. Academic instruction is planned and implemented based on the Montessori Method and materials.

Maria Montessori and other experts have designed the educational materials that are used in these classrooms. Lessons are presented to individual students or are delivered in small groups. These lessons and materials meet the developmental needs and interests of students.

Students are active in the classroom for extended work times throughout the day. With teacher guidance, students choose their work and provide support to each other as a cohesive learning community.

Curricular areas include: Reading, Writing, Grammar, Spelling and Vocabulary, Listening and Speaking, Handwriting, Mathematics, Geometry, History, Geography, Geology, Biology, Botany, Zoology, Physical Sciences, Practical Life Skills, Technology, Music, Art, Health, and Physical Education.

What Does the Montessori School Day Look Like?

Students in the Montessori classroom may have the following work periods in their daily schedule:

Uninterrupted Work Period - The purpose of this uninterrupted work time is to allow students time to deeply concentrate on their work. Typically this 3 hour block of time is when teachers' present lessons and students work on their tasks. Teachers do their best to ensure that there are as few interruptions as possible during this time.

Outdoor Environment – The Montessori curriculum ideally also provides periods of time, other than recess, during which Montessori students are involved in activities conducted outside, in a prepared outdoor environment.

Special Area Classes - The Montessori curriculum includes an integrated approach to art, music, health, and physical activities. Therefore, special area classes will be integrated around uninterrupted work periods. Media Center and computer lab time will also be available to students. Students who desire to participate in Gifted & Talented (grades 3-6), Band and Orchestra (Grades 4-6) may do so, however, please note that scheduling varies by school and may take place during students' uninterrupted work time. Special Education resources are available for all qualifying students.

Lunch/Recess – Will be scheduled to minimize the impact on the uninterrupted instructional time. Students will receive a minimum of 30 minutes recess time daily.

Early Release – Every Wednesday students are released from school earlier than the usual scheduled daily release time. During this time staff meets to further professional development.

Professional Development Early Release Days – Throughout the school year extra early release days are scheduled for staff professional development activities

Student Behavioral Expectations in the Montessori Classroom

Ideally, Montessori students will grow to be independent learners. Respect for fellow students, teachers, the environment, and themselves, as well as grace and courtesy, are important aspects of the Montessori curriculum. Students are taught peaceful conflict resolution. Montessori students are inspired to become respectful, responsible, peaceful members of society.

School Policies and Procedures

The Mesa Public Schools Montessori programs are considered a school-within-a-school. The programs were established to offer alternative educational choices for parents. Each of the Montessori programs is housed within a neighborhood school. Authentic Montessori education is taught by state certified teachers who have or are in the process of Montessori certification.

The Montessori programs adhere to the policies and procedures of their home schools. Information on absences, school arrival and dismissal procedures, health and illness procedures, school lunches, before and after school care, after school enrichment programs, and community building school activities are coordinated by school administration. The school office staff is readily available to offer help and answer questions.

Montessori Program Staff

Teachers

MPS Montessori teachers have Montessori certification in the levels in which they teach and/or hold Arizona Teaching Certification.

Classroom Assistants

Montessori classrooms have one instructional assistant per classroom. They play an integral role in ensuring that the Montessori Method and curriculum can be fully implemented.

Transportation

Transportation of students to and from school is the responsibility of the parents. Students may ride the school bus if they live within the regular bus route of the school. Daycare buses regularly drop off and pick-up students from the school.

Visitors at School

Many parents are active volunteers in their child's classroom. Arrangements for visits or volunteering should be made with your child's teacher. All visitors on campus must sign in with the school office.

Parent Resources

Each Montessori program across the district will provide opportunities to familiarize parents with Montessori philosophy. Parent informational meetings are planned throughout the school year, topics include: Montessori philosophy, language, math, discipline, child development and Montessori in the home. Attendance is highly encouraged.

Suggested Readings

The following books on Dr. Montessori and her approach to learning are recommended. They may be available at the school. Please check with the Montessori staff for other suggested recommendations.

- Rita Kramer, Maria Montessori: A Biography
- Angeline Lillard, The Science Behind the Genius
- Paula Polk Lillard, Montessori: A Modern Approach
- Dr. Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence
- Paula Polk and L. L. Jessen, Montessori from the Start

PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) or PTA (Parent Teacher Association)

Parents of Montessori students are invited and encouraged to participate with the PTA at their school. The PTA offers help and support to all of the programs at the school.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my child need to have a Montessori experience in a Pre K or Kindergarten setting to be successful in the K-6 grade Montessori program.

It is beneficial for children to come to the elementary grades from a Montessori early childhood program where they have been exposed to control of movement, independence, and work habits. There may be some adjustment for children who begin in a Montessori program without previous Montessori early childhood experience. With support from parents, teachers, and peers, most students transition successfully. Parents are encouraged to research the Montessori philosophy when considering enrolling their child.

How can I help my child be successful in a Montessori classroom?

- Encourage your child to develop a positive attitude toward learning.
- Foster your child's curiosity, creativity, and vocabulary.
- Help your child develop self-confidence through logical consequences.
- Provide various opportunities for social experiences.
- Assist your child in developing a sense of concentration, self-control, independence, and persistence.
- Provide opportunities for your child to make choices independently.
- Read with or to your child daily.
- Work on math facts daily.

How can the Montessori teacher keep control of the classroom when all the students are doing different things?

The Montessori environment allows the student to experience freedom within structure. As students are ready, teachers present many new lessons. Each student is encouraged to practice lessons, choosing his individual work from the carefully arranged classroom. Students are responsible for completing practice. Due to the expectation of focus and concentration, teachers are available to engage others in individual or small group lessons.

Will my child be prepared to enter junior high school?

The Montessori Method meets the needs of the whole child. Children are prepared to be responsible, independent, and self-aware human beings. Generally, Montessori students adjust well to junior high school and are well prepared academically.

Enrollment

The MPS Open Enrollment Policy makes free Montessori education available to children in K-6th grade. MPS also offers a tuition-based preschool program. When a program is full, students are placed on a waiting list on a first come first serve basis. Siblings of enrolled students are given preference for enrollment.

*Kindergarten students must meet statutory age requirements to enroll in a Montessori classroom. As per Arizona State Statute, students who turn the age of five between September 1 and December 31 must be assessed. Please visit the MPS website at www.mpsaz.org/curriculum/kindergarten to learn more about the Early Entrance Process.

After enrollment is completed, school staff will ensure that students are placed appropriately according to the Montessori philosophy and heterogeneous grouping practices.

MPS Montessori Programs Sites:

- Bush Elementary School (K-6): school address: 4925 E. Ingram St. Mesa, AZ 85205 school phone: 480-472-8500
- Johnson Elementary School (K-6): school address: 3807 E. Pueblo Ave, Mesa, AZ 85206 school phone: 480-472-6800
- Jordan Center for Early Education (Preschool and K): school address: 3320 N. Carriage Lane, Chandler, AZ 85224 school phone: 480-472-3800
- Pomeroy Elementary School (K-6): school address: 1507 W. Shawnee Dr. Chandler AZ 85244 school phone: 480-472-3700

Enrollment Process

The enrollment process in the Montessori Program is intended is to provide parents with the tools and knowledge necessary to make an informed, educated, and insightful choice in placing their child in a Montessori classroom.

It is not the intention of this process to exclude any student, but rather to describe and understand each learner's qualities, skills, and expectations that best ensure a successful placement in a Montessori classroom. Parents can effectively make this important educational decision with a clear, in-depth understanding of the Montessori philosophy and approach to learning.

The following questions can help parents and teachers make an informed placement decision for students.

- Can my child demonstrate long periods of concentration and focus?
- Is my child intrinsically motivated to learn?
- Does my child take responsibility for his or her own behavior?
- Can my child focus and complete one task at a time even when there are distractions?
- Can my child set a goal and work towards that goal without extrinsic rewards?
- Does my child work cooperatively with other children?
- Does my child show respect, kindness, and a willingness to help others?
- As a parent, do I have enough time to learn about the Montessori Philosophy and participate in classroom and program activities?

- Does my child have special needs that may require additional support in a Montessori Classroom?
- Does my child participate in household chores and work cooperatively with siblings and other family members?

Registration and Enrollment Process Checklist

Step One: Contact the school registrar.

Call or visit one of our four Mesa Public Schools offering Montessori programs. Speak with the school's registrar and indicate your interest in the Montessori Program.

Step Two: Obtain and read the Parent Handbook and complete the Parent Questionnaire.

Please read the Parent Handbook carefully. As you fill out the Parent Questionnaire be sure to reflect deeply about your child and record the information. An honest assessment of your child's skills and abilities will help ensure a proper placement.

Step Three: Schedule and attend an observation and/or attend an open house.

Depending on the school, you will be asked to schedule a time for a classroom observation or open house. Please turn in the Parent Questionnaire when you come to this visit. If you have any specific questions after this visit, please arrange a time to contact the teacher. Please note that if you visit a classroom during instructional time, the teacher's main responsibility during your observation is to attend to his/her students. Depending on school site, follow up visits may be arranged.

Step Four: Depending on availability and programmatic fit, the enrollment process is completed by the school office.

“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment”

Dr. Maria Montessori

For additional information please visit our web-site at:

www.mpsaz.org/montessori

Registration Materials: Montessori Parent Questionnaire

Child's name: _____ Age: _____ boy/girl

Parents' names: _____ Email Address: _____

Please complete and return this questionnaire to the school office.

1. Explain why you feel the Montessori environment is a good educational fit for your child.
2. Does your child have previous Montessori experience? If yes, where did your child attend and for how long?
3. How does your child handle doing a task he/she does not want to do?
4. Does your child have any special needs? Does your child currently have IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or 504? If yes, please explain.
5. Give an example of how your child demonstrates concentration other than playing video games or playing with a favorite toy.

Montessori Observational Guidelines

(This guidance is intended for those attending an observational site visit)

Welcome to our Montessori program. To make your time as productive as possible, we ask that you follow the observational guidelines below.

Please remain in the seat provided for you and refrain from talking with the students, teachers, or other observers. If a child approaches you or talks with you, please respond briefly but do not engage in any extended conversation or activity.

As you observe the students working, consider some of these points:

- **How are the children initiating their work? Is there completion of the work cycle?**
- **Note the different lengths of time the children are involved in the work.**
- **How do some children, even when distracted, easily return to their work?**
- **Are children exhibiting responsibility and respect?**
- **Are the children working in small groups? Note the level of interaction between and among the children.**
- **What are the different activities in which the children are engaged?**
- **Note the manner in which the teacher presents a lesson.**
- **Notice the individual reactions of the children to the lesson.**
- **Feel free to take notes about questions that you may want to ask the teacher at a later time.**