

The Elementary Environment (An Overview)

Philosophy

Dr. Montessori believed that children are far more capable than adults think them to be. The Montessori Elementary school day builds on the responsibilities and practical life lessons learned at home and during the primary years. As students progress through the elementary and middle school years, they will take on more ownership of their daily lives and their education, which will prepare them eventually to transition into adults who can effectively take care of themselves, their environment and others.

The Montessori Cosmic Curriculum

In addition to a Montessori math, language, and geometry curriculum, your child will participate in a cosmic curriculum. Cosmic Education is designed to give children a big picture of the universe, the Earth, and the role that they play in the universe. Cosmic education integrates history, geography, physics, chemistry and biology into a cohesive study of our existence. These ideas are presented through stories and impressionistic charts that inspire imagination. Through exploration with their imagination, children are able to find themselves and discover their place in this world. It is the role of the Montessori teacher to present impressionistic lessons that give children an idea of the “big picture” and leave the children the freedom to study in depth independently.

Through their work through a cosmic curriculum, Montessori elementary children are able to answer the questions “Who am I?” “Where do I come from?” and “Why am I here?” Answering these questions gives children an idea of why the world works the way it does, and what part they play in changing the world. These questions all come together to create children who are conscious of their responsibility for shaping the future. First, children must understand who we are (Who am I?) and how we got here (Where do I come from?) to understand their cosmic task (Why am I here?). Giving children this ability to be aware creates young people and adults with the desire and the ability to positively change the world.

Policies

Promptness/Attendance

Regular and prompt attendance is extremely important for every child’s continuing academic, social and emotional development. Although in the Montessori environment each child works at his/her own pace, consistency is a key factor. A consistent morning routine can positively affect a child’s learning ability and comfort level at school. It also ensures that they receive lessons as planned to maximize their learning potential.

Tardiness will not be tolerated. The doors of the building will be shut promptly at 9:00 am, so please plan accordingly to avoid reaching the arrivals line too late.

Preparedness

☑ Materials

The Materials and Activities Fee (which is now due in addition to your tuition fee) ensures your child will receive the necessary supplies over the course of the year to complete his/her work in the classroom. The only item we require you to purchase is an expandable folder (4 pockets) to transport your child’s papers, work plans, and other papers to and from home on a daily basis.

☑ Clothing

It is recommended that all children keep one full set change of clothes at school in a large Ziploc bag (marked with the child’s name). In the event your child’s clothing becomes wet or soiled during the course of the day, s/he will have a clean set of clothes in which to change. Please make sure the clothing is consistent with the season and is marked with your child’s name.

📺 Electronics

We all know our children are very tech-savvy. However, at this level, we need to step back and focus on the foundational skills. Having a computer do the work is a shortcut, and we want to be sure the children can find the answers without relying on electronics. Therefore, there will be NO cell phones, iPads, tablets or gaming devices allowed in the classroom. The children will participate in computer lessons with Mrs. Sanchez and research when they are ready.

Nutrition

To help satisfy your child's hunger for a longer amount of time, please provide at least two of the five food groups listed below:

- Grains (e.g. bread, pasta, rice, crackers, pretzels, granola, cereal)
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Protein (e.g. cottage cheese, lean cuts of meat, fish and poultry)
- Dairy (e.g. low-fat milk, yogurt and reduced-fat cheese).
- *Water and milk are the only drinks allowed at school.*

Lunches

Please encourage your child to pack (or assist) in packing his/her own nutritional lunch. Please no chocolate, soda, or candy. If these items are packed in your child's lunch, he or she will bring it home to eat after school. Your child will have access to a microwave (30-60 second time limit) in the classroom for heating up lunch. Your child is responsible for bringing a cloth napkin and cloth placemat. Please refer to the Parent Handbook and your Parent 3-Ring Binder for current Lunch Program information.

Snacks

As a way to help meet the needs of your child's growing body and keep her/his mind more productive, we like to have a healthy snack available each day during the morning work cycle. **Please pack your child a snack each day. We will no longer provide snack.** We encourage the children to be conscious of the importance of nutrition, so we will only allow healthy snacks.

Each family will be expected to provide materials for food prep or nutrition lessons throughout the year. Please plan to sign up for 2 weeks. A sign up sheet will be provided during parent orientation.

Parental Support

At home

Your involvement with your child's education is critical at this stage of development. There are certain activities that children MUST engage in at home to support the work they complete in class. We ask that your child engage in:

- **Nightly reading –minimum of 20 minutes each day (preferably aloud)**
- **Math fact practice – to aid in memorization as your child moves from concrete to abstract**
- **Waseca Language or Wordly Wise – Weekly spelling/vocabulary work to be done at home (due every Friday)**

In addition to this daily work, we may ask your child to engage in the following activities:

- Journaling/writing – in his/her journal book
- Outside research – initiated by the child's interests
- Special assignments – as determined by the teacher
- Practical life at home – chores to encourage more responsibility
- Outings – field trips to further explore interests

Every child in our classrooms has individualized expectations of his or her daily work. Some children will need to bring daily work home for extra practice.

At school

Your involvement with your child's classroom further enriches your child's experiences and maximizes the teachers' time. There are many ways you can help:

- Volunteer – From creating materials that enhance lessons to helping the children care for the animals, there are a variety of opportunities inside and outside of the classroom where you can make a difference.
- Chaperone – Getting out in the world is an essential part of the Montessori Elementary years. If you want to be considered as a chaperone for one of the many field trips planned for the year, please indicate your interest to the teachers and room parents.
- When visiting your child's classroom, you will be expected to follow classroom procedures, including:
 - Appropriate attire must be worn.
 - Use of a quiet voice at all times is required.
 - When the bell rings, everyone should stop, look and listen.
 - If your visit is during a silent work period, you will also be expected to be silent. If your visit is during a whispering work period, you will also be expected to whisper.
 - When a child is working, you may not disrupt his work.
 - Please see and sign the attached contract.

In the Community

Your decision to be part of the MWS community was an important one. We are committed to providing your child with a positive learning experience. Our success is dependant upon an open line of communication between parents and teachers. We welcome your comments, questions and concerns. If at any time you feel we are not responding to you or your child's needs, please bring it to our attention and allow us the opportunity to address the situation. Working together we can make the elementary years at MWS one of the best possible experiences for you and your child.

Daily Schedule

8:40am – 9:00am: Arrivals (Your child will be expected to arrive at school ready to work. He will retrieve his work plan as he enters the class and begin work immediately)

9:00am – 9:30am: Morning Meeting

9:30am – 11:45am: Morning Work Cycle and Math, Language, and Geometry Lessons

11:45am – 12:00pm: Clean up and Work Plan Evaluation (Your child will evaluate his progress from the morning work cycle to determine his afternoon focus.)

12:00pm – 1:00pm: Lunch and Recess or P.E.

1:30pm – 2:45pm: Culture

2:45pm – 3:15pm: Silent Reading or Read Aloud and Dismissal

**Reading Groups: Each child will be assessed and placed in a reading group according to his/her reading level. You will receive more information on these groups following your child's assessment. The Puffin Reading Group will meet daily from 9:30-10:30 am. Dolphin, Macaw and Otter Reading Groups will meet once a week from 11:00 – 12:00.

Weekly Schedule

Wednesday:

1:00 – 3:00: Spanish and Library Rotations

Tuesday

12:30 – 1:15: MANATEE PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Please send your child in clothes appropriate for outdoor movement activities and in close-toed shoes)

Thursday

12:30 – 1:15: FALCON PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Please send your child in clothes appropriate for outdoor movement activities and in close-toed shoes)

Friday:

9:00 am – 9:30 am: WORDLY WISE MEETINGS AND SPELLING TEST

9:30am – 11:30am: HUMANITIES CENTERS (Your child will cycle in grade-level groups through art and practical life)

11:30am – 12:30pm: Clean up, lunch and recess

1:30pm – 2:30pm: HUMANITIES CENTERS (Your child will cycle in grade-level groups through Spanish and music)

2:30pm – 3:15pm: Clean up and Dismissal

Progress

At MWS we believe in individually paced academic progress. We do not assign letter grades or rank each class according to their achievements. Student progress, however, is monitored in the following ways and according to the following timelines:

☑ Parent observations

You will have the opportunity to see how your child functions within the classroom and with their fellow students. Please remember to follow all classroom procedures throughout your visit.

☑ Parent Education Events

You will be invited to the classroom to view and experience some of the Montessori lessons in context with curriculum.

☑ Parent/Teacher conferences and Progress reports

As set forth in the Parent Handbook, Parent/Teacher Conferences for new students will be conducted in October to discuss the child's progress and any areas of concern of parents or teachers. Parent/Teacher Conferences for all students will be conducted twice a year in January and May; written progress reports will be given at these conferences. In addition, you are welcome to schedule an appointment at any time to discuss your child's academic, social, or emotional development, or to observe your child's classroom.

☑ Daily/Weekly

Student work plans will be sent home every Friday for review. Work plans will remain in your child's binder and travel to and from school daily. These cannot be removed from the binder and must return each day. On Friday, they should be reviewed at home, signed and returned on Monday.

Please see the school calendar for progress report and conference dates.

Parent/Teacher Communication

Effective communication between parents and teachers is critical to ensuring your child's success in the elementary environment. You may choose to communicate with your teachers by written note brought in with your child or given to the Main Office, via a phone call to the Main Office, or through classroom and other email addresses:

Manatee Room: manatee_room@montessoriworldschool.com

Falcon Room: falcon_room@montessoriworldschool.com

If you receive your teacher's phone number for a field trip or other event, please respect his or her personal time and only use the contact information for that day. We ask that you stick to using the classroom email. Teachers can also be reached by phone through the front office. All communication will receive a response within 24 hours.

Elementary Teaching Team

Manatee Room

Chelsea Sissom, lead teacher, was born in Burlington, North Carolina and raised in the Amarillo, Texas area. She was a Montessori student in the Primary and Elementary programs at Amarillo Montessori Academy, where she returned to work as an assistant in the Infant/Toddler and After-School programs while in high school and college. Chelsea graduated Summa Cum Laude from West Texas A&M University in 2010 with a General Studies degree, focusing on Dance and Marine Biology. Following her graduation from college, her love of animals brought her to Orlando, where she worked as an educator at Sea World and, subsequently, as a trainer and performer at Pets Ahoy.

Chelsea began working towards her Master's Degree in Education at The University of Central Florida in 2012, and although she is continuing to pursue that degree, she realized after several classes that the Montessori Method was in her heart; consequently, she enrolled in and completed the 6-9 course at The Montessori Center for Teacher Education in San Diego, California. Currently, she resides in Orlando with her 3 dogs, Rico, Mischief, and Cash.

Chelsea is looking forward to her third year at MWS and is anxious to share her love of learning, as well as her love of and experience with animals with the children in her class.

Heidi Jones, assistant teacher, was born in Illinois, and lived there until a family move brought her to Florida at the age of 14. She lives with her husband and 12-year-old son, and has two grown up step daughters who live in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Mrs. Jones studied Hospitality Management at St. Petersburg College. She worked as a Food and Beverage Director, and in the hospitality industry for over 15 years. After the birth of her son, she chose to work from home and created an online store in which she sells children's shoes and clothing.

Mrs. Jones brought her son to Montessori World School and knew immediately that it was a perfect match for him. She wanted to give back to the school that was giving so much to her son and started to volunteering and substituting. She started working as the Resource Coordinator last year and loves to be involved with the school in any way possible.

Falcon Room

Gary Moulaison, lead teacher, is originally from Nova Scotia, Canada where he attained his undergraduate degree in Theatre Studies from Acadia University. After acting for a few years, he moved to Newfoundland and received a BS in Education from Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland.

He has spent six years teaching grades three and four on an isolated northern native reserve in northwestern Ontario. Understanding the challenges of living and teaching on a native reserve was both rewarding and demanding but living in the pristine Boreal forest in northern Canada was an experience he will never forget.

He is a certified Special Education Specialist. Working with underprivileged youth in the north gave him a new view on the teaching style of traditional schools and led him towards the Montessori methodology of teaching. He trained in New Hampshire with the Seacoast Montessori Teacher Training Center and is looking forward to his fifth year here at MWS.

He is passionate about theatre, teaching, and photography.

Chareme Ortiz, assistant teacher,

Mrs. Chareme Ortiz was born as the second part in a set of two (twins) on an Army base in Leominster, Massachusetts. She does, however, consider herself to be native to New Jersey as that's where she was raised by her single father.

After attending William Patterson University, Mrs. Ortiz relocated to Florida to get to know her biological mother. It was during this time, while working for a subdivision of Orlando Regional Hospital as their Assistant Director of Finance, that Mrs. Ortiz met Mrs. Hardaway and her girls. It was Mrs. Hardaway's girls that piqued Mrs. Ortiz' interest in the Montessori Method. Within the year, Mrs. Ortiz was interning and working toward her AMS Primary Montessori Certification. She has put on many hats as a Montessori teacher including assistant, lead teacher, and teacher trainer.

Mrs. Ortiz took some time off after having her children Nora and Danny. During her time off, she set up a Montessori room in her home where she taught both of her children using the Montessori Method. Mrs. Ortiz joined the MWS team in 2014 as their Elementary Afterschool Teacher and fell in love with the community at the school. She is looking forward to working in the Falcon classroom.

Manatee and Falcon Parent Contract

Dear Parents,

This week, you and I become partners in one of the most important jobs we have--helping your child to become all he or she can be. It's a scary, exciting, and challenging task--and a terrifically rewarding one. We would like to make a contract with you.

We promise to greet your child each morning with the expectation that the day will be important. Will you learn about the school program so you can offer the same enthusiasm?

We promise to prepare exciting lessons. Will you help your child get to school well rested and on time to appreciate them?

We promise to assign worthwhile homework every week that can be completed in 30 minutes per day. Will you check it daily to see that your child has read the assignment and completed it to the best of his or her ability? Will you help your child figure out a system for making sure that the assignment is brought to school each morning?

We promise to work to make your child's day an intellectually stimulating one. Will you ask questions and encourage discussions so that your child can share his or her educational growth with you?

We promise to call or write whenever I feel that your child needs a little extra help in getting along with others, growing in responsibility, or working harder. Will you call or write me if you hear a report about school that bothers you?

We promise to open our classroom doors to you so that you can fully support your child's education. Will you follow our classroom procedures when you are visiting?

One of our goals each year is to encourage your child to participate fully in schoolwork and school fun. You can help by sharing school life. Children learn what they live. When your child sees his or her life surrounded by caring and attentive parents and school staff, he or she will surely join with us to help make this the best year yet.

We are looking forward to an exciting year and a rewarding partnership with you.

Sincerely,

Please share any ideas you have on how we can better work together to ensure your child has a successful year. Then sign and return this to me as soon as possible.

Parent Signatures: _____ Date: _____
