

## **MONTESSORI PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The Woods Montessori program meets the needs and interests of three to six year olds. Learning is intrinsically motivating and joyful in the multi-age classroom and prepared environment. There are opportunities for children to lead, teach, interact, and learn through collaboration, cooperation, and the observation of others. Materials are located at child-level so that students may pursue their own interests at their own pace under the guidance of our dedicated and well-trained teachers and staff.

Singing, stories, poetry, sharing and outdoor play augment the Montessori program. In addition to activities in Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, and English Language Arts, teachers enrich the classrooms with thematic, integrated units that include studies of the continents as well as holidays, seasons, and animals. Three and four year old children participate in library, music, and physical education during their morning at The Woods. Four year olds (with teacher recommendation) have the option of participating in a four day-a-week full-day program (The Owls) that allows additional time for extended Montessori activities including Hands On Science, library, and cooking in the afternoon. The Luncher Program for five-year-olds is a full day with time for both individual and small group activities. In the afternoon, the “Lunchers” have French or Spanish, music, fine art, physical education, library, and computers.

Storytellers, puppet theatre, music and science programs are presented during the year to enhance classroom activities and provide art and theater experiences that draw from the wealth of opportunities in the D.C. area. In addition, Lunchers may travel to The National Gallery, The Kennedy Center, Montgomery County Recycling Center, Homestead Farm, and museums.

*“The child brings us great  
hope and a new vision.  
There is much we can do  
to bring humanity to  
a deeper understanding,  
to a higher well-being,  
and to a greater spirituality.”*

*Dr. Maria Montessori*

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## THE MONTESSORI CURRICULUM

The four general areas of a Montessori classroom -- Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, and Language -- interact to provide a child with a rich and rewarding preschool experience. Activities are interdisciplinary, falling into more than one curricular area. No area is complete without the others. In addition, Montessori activities engage the active minds of young children as the students create new knowledge, solidify prior learning, and explore the world around them.

### **Practical Life**

In the Practical Life area, children choose meaningful tasks that imitate adult work while developing coordination, concentration, independence, and self-discipline. Activities such as polishing, chair washing, sorting, pouring, and cutting develop fine motor coordination and provide an introduction to sequence and good work habits. The dressing frames, which offer practice in buttoning, snapping, lacing, and tying, promote independence, self-esteem and the pleasure of doing things for oneself.



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## Sensorial

The Sensorial area was designed by Maria Montessori to facilitate education through the senses. Through the activities in this area, students are prepared for reading and writing, and for the decimal system in mathematics. The materials used in this area isolate and classify qualities such as size, shape, color, sound, taste, smell, temperature, and texture. Connections are established with mathematics, art, and language arts, as students label colors, geometric shapes, and solids.



## English Language Arts

Children in the Montessori classroom work with sandpaper letters and movable alphabets to discover the relationship between sound and symbol, letters and words. Through this process, students develop phonetic writing skills that precede the explosion into reading. Classroom teachers and guest readers encourage the appreciation of good literature. Students move toward independent reading through read-aloud sessions and independent work with books, which are carefully selected for text support and vocabulary development. Finger plays, poems and songs allow opportunities for listening and speaking. The Lunchers are introduced to some of the 6 +1 Writing Traits within the framework of journal writing.

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## **Mathematics**

The Montessori classroom fosters curiosity and exploration in math with a wide variety of hands-on experiences with number and quantity. Montessori materials -- rods, spindles, beads and boards, supplemented with counters, balance and pattern blocks -- are concrete tools that children use to build number sense and actively engage in the processes of mathematics. These materials and the *Everyday Mathematics* activities and games offer discovery, repetition, reinforcement, and problem-solving opportunities and provide a multi-sensory foundation for mathematical understanding. Simple data collection and graphing exercises as well as work with the clock, calendar, money, time, and measurement encourage an awareness of number, order and relationship that is natural and fascinating to the young child.

## **Science**

Students are introduced to earth science, the animal kingdom and the human body. They also explore seasonal changes, magnetism, and properties of water, air, and light through observation as well as hands-on activities and experiments.

## **Social Studies**

The Montessori philosophy stresses the awareness and appreciation for the many cultures present in our world. Songs, customs and artifacts from other countries increase children's understanding of other cultures. World geography is introduced through puzzle maps, which encourages children to see the world as larger than the Washington, D.C. area. As each continent is studied, the child explores new people and places as well as the accompanying vocabulary words, images, foods, clothing, art and land forms.

## **French and Spanish**

Montessori full day students begin to develop oral proficiency in basic French or Spanish vocabulary. Using songs, games and coloring to reinforce their French/ Spanish skills provides students with opportunities to follow directions and connect pictures with words. These activities teach and reinforce pronunciation, structures and vocabulary--colors, numbers, clothing, parts of the body, family, weather, seasons, and animals.

## **Computers**

In the full day Montessori program, students visit the computer lab and use PC software to reinforce concepts from the classroom. They also learn computer fundamentals: identifying computer parts, handling the mouse, using the keyboard, working with menus, saving and printing. Students work with a variety of math, reading, graphics, and writing software, including *KidPix*, *Type to Learn Jr.*, *Kidspiration*, *Math Blaster*, *Reading Blaster*, and *Children's Encarta*.

## **Library**

Literature appreciation and life-long love of reading are the main emphases of library time for Montessori students. Weekly story time helps develop listening skills and a love of both fiction and non-fiction books. Montessori Lunchers learn library etiquette, the proper care and handling of books, and the works of many authors and illustrators. Lunchers and extended day students (Owls) are encouraged to borrow books each week.

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## **Art**

Art education for Lunchers includes learning about, talking about, and producing works of art. The elements of design—line, shape and color--and the awareness of the power of artistic expression to communicate thoughts, feelings and experiences through art are introduced. Using two-dimensional processes allow students to use many kinds of tools and media—paint, pens, pencils, markers, chalk, craypas--and a variety of paper to explore ideas, texture and space. They can also experiment with color and color mixing. Using three-dimensional processes allow students to experiment with construction and to use clay to experiment with additive and subtractive concepts. Students also learn about famous artists, their style, and their work. Practice with fine motor control, body awareness, gross motor coordination, and art vocabulary are integrated into the program.

## **Music**

Students learn a variety of songs in their classrooms-- fun and seasonal songs, movement and dance songs as well as songs relating to classroom themes. Each class also has a set of rhythm sticks and instruments. Both half and full-day students perform on stage at the Montessori program in June.

In their weekly music classes, the Montessori children begin to build a large repertoire of simple songs and song-games that reinforce classroom themes. Students focus on the joyful celebration of music, vocal exploration, tuneful singing, and steady beat. The Montessori Lunchers use this foundation of songs, games, and rhymes to explore such musical concepts like fast/slow, loud/soft, high/low, smooth/jerky, short/long and same/different. Percussion and Orff instruments are used to enhance this musical experience.

## **Guidance**

In the guidance program, Montessori children have lessons in many areas of social development including identifying feelings, maintaining friendships, solving problems, and dealing with tattling, teasing, bullying, and bossiness. Media literacy and nutrition are also discussed. Social skills are strengthened in these small “playgroup” classes where sharing, fairness, and communication are emphasized.

## **Physical Education**

The Montessori physical education curriculum is a balance of movement concepts, motor skills and character development designed to enhance the cognitive, affective and physical development of each child. Emphasis is placed on having the children feel comfortable and competent in any physical environment or activity (scooters, hula hoops, parachutes and all types and sizes of balls). In addition to the introduction of motor skills, safety and cooperation skills are integrated into each lesson. Children develop sportsmanship and teamwork, as well as a sense of healthy competition and fair play.



“Give your child unconditional love,  
a love that is not dependent on report cards,  
clean hands or popularity.

Give your child a sense of your whole-hearted acceptance,  
acceptance of his human frailties as well as his  
abilities and virtues.

Give him a sense of truth; make him aware of himself as a  
citizen of the universe in which there are many obstacles  
as well as fulfillments.

Give your child permission to grow up and make  
his own life independent of you.  
These are the laws of honoring your child.”

From Joshua Liebman’s *A Parent’s Commandments*