

MAY SANDS



MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Family Handbook

2023-2024

We encourage respect for self, others and environment,
promote a desire to seek knowledge, and provide an academically challenging program.

Family Handbook

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Why Montessori

For more than a century, Montessori has been thriving around the globe, and contemporary research validates the effectiveness of the Montessori Method. Several key elements of the approach meet the educational goals today's parents have for their children, including growing into capable people who will have a strong sense of self, the ability to connect with others, and the potential to be productive throughout their lives. A Montessori education develops students who are capable, accountable, knowledgeable people who have the strong sense of self they will need to thrive in the real world.

What is a Charter School

At May Sands Montessori we are able to provide this method through the public school district as a charter school. Charter schools are public schools that operate under a performance contract, also known as "the charter", which frees them from most rules and regulations created for traditional public schools. An individual, a group of parents or classroom guides, a business, a municipality, or a legal entity creates charter schools. As part of the contract, charter schools are held strictly accountable for academic and financial results. They have the independence and autonomy to make their own decisions. Financial control allows for the ability to implement and pay for the decisions made by charter school founders.

Teacher as Observer and Guide

The guide is a catalyst for learning and observes as the child chooses his/her activities. Maria Montessori valued the role of the prepared educator in the learning environment. In the Montessori classroom, the role of the guide is to continue to adapt to the environment and facilitate exploration while observing and assessing the child's individual needs; the guide is the link between the child and the environment. By implementing observation techniques, the guide is able to meet the individual needs and interests of each child. The guide is dedicated to the development of students who are self-disciplined, cooperative, responsible, creative thinkers of the community and world. Along with preparing students to be productive members of society, the guide strives to provide solid foundations in intellectual growth, humanitarianism and peace.

The Prepared Environment

The May Sands Montessori School acknowledges the importance of the prepared environment and offers:

- Integration of the arts, sciences, geography, history, and language to inspire students to seek knowledge for personal satisfaction.
- The presentation of knowledge as part of a large-scale narrative in which the origins of the earth, life, human communities (agricultural and urban), empires, and modern history unfolds, always in the context of the wholeness of life.
- The presentation of formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc. to provide accurate, organized information while respecting the child's intelligence and interests.
- The use of timelines, pictures, charts, and other visual aids, to provide a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of each discipline.
- A mathematics curriculum presented with concrete materials that simultaneously reveal arithmetic, geometric and algebraic correlations.
- An emphasis on open-ended research and in-depth study that uses primary and secondary sources, such as books, as well as other materials.
- Going out and using community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom.

General Information

Charter Board of Directors

The May Sands Montessori School is a not-for-profit corporation, managed by a nine-member Board of Directors: six (6) parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school, and three (3) representative members of the community. The election, terms of office and duties shall be as contained in the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws. There are four officers of the Charter Board of Directors that form the Executive Board: the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Board Procedures

These procedures have been designed to keep discussion orderly and to provide an opportunity for you to participate in a Board of Directors' meeting.

How to get on the Agenda

The Board can only act on items included in the formal agenda (which is posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting during which action is sought). If you want the Board to formally discuss or act on an item, your item must be placed on the official meeting agenda. To do so, follow these steps:

1. Notify the Board Secretary a minimum of 5 work days before the board meeting when the item is to be considered. Requests must reach the board secretary by 4:00 p.m. the previous Monday (meetings are usually on a Wednesday).
2. Identify yourself and/or all individuals who will speak on the agenda item.
3. Provide summary information so that the Board can be prepared to address the item. Written documentation is preferred because it reduces the chance of error or misinterpretation. The board packet, which will contain the agenda, narratives, recommendations, and supporting documentation, is usually prepared 5 days prior to regular meetings. Packets are sent to Board members at least three days before the meeting.

When you submit items for the agenda, you and other speakers will be invited to sit at the board table and address the Board members. Discussion limit is 10 minutes, unless the Board agrees to extend the time.

The Board generally deals with an agenda item as a discussion item at one meeting and as an action item at a subsequent meeting. This allows time for reflection and further staff and community input. If agenda items, questions or problems relate to legal issues, state law permits the Board to go into closed session to receive such presentations.

How to comment on Agenda Items

You may also present information, ask questions, or comment on topics already on the agenda. With agenda items, usually the Board hears recommendations and data by the administrative staff and then discusses the topic before taking action. Your time to speak will be after the Board members' discussion and before their action on that item.

The Board Secretary will invite speakers to the board table. To address the Board about an agenda item, you should take these steps:

1. Sign your name on the "sign-in sheet" found on the board table.
2. Identify the agenda item you wish to address. The Board secretary will invite you to speak when your item is being discussed.

In the interest of time and to avoid duplication, it is suggested that groups wishing to speak should select a representative to speak for all. Representative speakers will be given extra time accordingly by the Chairperson.

Late Additions to the Agenda

Due to the importance of a posted agenda for public access to Montessori meetings, last minute additions are to be discouraged. When it is necessary for an item to be added, it must be sponsored at the beginning of the meeting by a Board Member. Once sponsored, all late additions must pass by a two thirds vote of the Board to be accepted as an addition. If passed, the item will be officially added to the agenda by the Chairperson.

Charter School Committees

Charter School Committees are appointed by the Charter Board President, with the approval of the Charter Board of Directors, and are responsible for carrying on the functions of the Corporation. The Charter Board President and the Principal are standing members of all committees. Corporation members (parents & guardians of Charter School students) are required to serve on a committee.

Bylaws Committee

Every four (4) years or at such other times that the President deems it appropriate, he or she shall appoint a bylaws committee to make such recommendations for any changes that are deemed as necessary. Such recommendations are to be submitted, if possible, for Board approval prior to the January Corporation meeting; and, in any event, no later than prior to the May Corporation meeting.

Development/Planning Committee

The Development/Planning Committee shall consist of, but not be limited to, one Board member, two non-Board members, and a director/directress. The committee shall be responsible for researching and reporting to the Board current and long-term financial planning including, but not limited to, building maintenance and repair, expansion, enrollment and staffing strategies.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall be composed of, but not limited to, the Treasurer, one other Board member and one other Corporation member. The Committee shall be responsible for: preparing in conjunction with the Staff Committee and the staff, the annual budget for presentation to the Board no later than the first Board meeting in April; and making recommendations regarding the fiscal matters of the School.

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee shall be responsible for planning school fundraising events, reviewing proposals for fundraisers, and evaluating fundraising events. The Fundraising Committee makes recommendations to the Principal and to the Board of Directors for approval of school fundraising events.

Community Cultivation Committee

The Community Cultivation Committee is responsible for organizing and/or providing any snacks and refreshments for Corporation meetings and holiday parties.

House & Grounds Committee

The House/Grounds Committee shall be responsible for the maintenance and renovation of the School under recommendations of the Principal and approval of the Board of Directors.

Public Relations Committee

The Public Relations Committee shall be responsible for promoting the school in a positive manner to the community at large.

Staffing Committee

The Staffing Committee shall consist of the President and any other members of the Executive Committee who wish to serve. The President may appoint up to two Board members to the Staffing Committee. The Committee shall be responsible for making recommendations to the Board regarding the hiring and dismissal of all contractual staff. The Staffing Committee may initiate advertising for vacancies and interview job applicants for contractual staff positions. Board members shall be given the opportunity to interview applicants for contractual positions.

Our School Staff

We have a well-rounded staff ready to serve you with any information you may require. Please see below for the description of each role and how they can assist you.

Administration

Principal

The Principal is responsible for carrying out the objectives and policies of the School Governing Board and to ensure that the school maintains the highest standards of academic excellence. Any questions that cannot be answered by the Lead Guide can be directed here.

Human Resources & Finance

Is responsible for any monies that come into the school (fundraising, school supply fees, after care payments, etc). If you have questions about your account, please contact our Finance Administrator.

Student Information

Responsible for student academic, testing and vaccination records. Our Student Information Systems Support Administrator is also responsible for enrollment at our school. Please direct any questions about enrollment, required forms or school records from them.

Front Desk

The Front Desk School Support Manager develops the student directory, maintains the school's volunteer and chaperone list, keeps up with family service hours and meeting attendance. This is also the Front face of our school and will be happy to help with any general questions or get you to the person to best answer your questions.

School Development Director

The School Development Director aids in building enrollment capacity, increasing funding streams, and promotes public relations for the school. If you have any questions on how you can get involved, please contact our Development Director.

Student Supports

Teacher of Student Supports

Teachers of Student Supports are responsible for planning and implementing instructional support of identified students that require additional support outside or within the classroom setting. This team can be contacted in regards to Special Education questions.

Behavioral Support/ Nautilus Lead

The Behavioral Support and Nautilus Lead assists students with interpersonal and social interactions with their peers and assists students when they are in need of calming techniques and other social and emotional support. Nautilus is the program in which we guide students back to the state of being engaged within the classroom if a student is in need of redirection outside the ability of the classroom instructors. (See System of Justness and Nautilus Approach).

Speech and Language Pathologist

The Speech and Language Pathologist works with students who are in need of Speech and Language Therapy. Students are worked with in small groups and as individuals as needed.

Instructional

Instructional Staff

Our Lead Guides are responsible for direct instruction and supervision of students, planning and implementing student-centered activities, and maintaining regular communication with student families. These Lead Guides are credentialed in both Montessori Education (Primary- Upper Elementary) as well as Florida Certified Instructors. Please direct any questions about your child's classroom directly to the Lead Guide.

Instructional Support Staff

Our Classroom Assistants are of the utmost importance to our classrooms. They are responsible for setting the tone during the work cycle, assisting children at lunch, on the playground and communicating with the Lead Guide about students. If you have questions about anything in the classroom, the Classroom Assistant can convey your message to the Lead Guide, but will refrain from discussing any particulars with families about children. We strive to keep communication directly between the Lead Guide and the Families.

Contact information for all staff members is available on our school website.

Arrival and Dismissal

Our school day begins at 8:15 and ends at 3:15. For safety purposes, students are not permitted on campus before 7:45.

Our Primary (Kindergarten and VPK) students will arrive on the Primary Playground beginning at 8:00. Parents/Guardians will park and walk their child into the arrivals gate, walk them into the playground and mark them present in the Attendance and Communication Binder.

All other program levels can arrive between 7:45 and 8:15. Late arrivals are very disruptive and affect your child as well as the rest of the class. We appreciate your adherence to our arrival policy. The campus is secured after 8:25 and students who arrive late must enter through the office. A member of the school staff will escort late arrivals to their classroom.

Our dismissal procedures are in place to facilitate as swift a process as possible, for the safety of your child. Students are dismissed promptly at 3:15. If your child is not yet at the dismissal area when you arrive at the front of the car line, please drive around the block to return to the cue, or find an available space to park & walk up to the dismissal area. We designate a Parent Waiting Zone at our walkers gate for those families who prefer to walk up to retrieve their child.

The dismissal procedure ends at 3:30 so that our staff may be able to close out the day on time. Students who are not picked up by 3:30 will be sent to our After School Program, where charges will apply.

It is a school policy that children will be released only to their parent/guardian or authorized persons listed on the dismissal record. Please keep this record up to date, including carpool arrangements. Special dismissal arrangements, including play dates, require advance notice in the form of a note or phone call to the Dismissal Team.

Our school is fortunate to have a school crossing guard stationed at the crosswalk at United and Pearl streets, whose primary purpose is ensuring student safety. Families that walk or bike with their children are expected to comply with state and local laws regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety. Families are asked to refrain from parking in the car line or dropping children off across United Street.

Attendance

Telephone messages concerning absences, late arrivals, or early absences should be made to 305-293-1400 ext. 53418 between 7:45 and 8:15 a.m.

The typical school year requires at least 180 student attendance days. It is expected that every student will maintain regular attendance throughout the school year. Families are strongly discouraged from taking vacations during the school year, as continuity with the student's education is paramount to academic success.

Students enrolled in May Sands Montessori School are required to attend school unless the absence has been excused. Additionally, each student is required to be on campus by the specified starting time of the school day. The Principal may grant an excused absence for the following reasons:

- Illness or injury (subject to signed documentation by an appropriate licensed health care or mental health professional or public health unit),
- Religious holiday,
- Death in the family, or
- Extreme circumstance (subject to documentation).

An "excused" absence is:

- a) Due to sickness of, or injury to, the student, attested to orally or in writing by the student's parent or guardian, or, in the event the absence is of three days or more, by a written statement of a licensed practicing physician, chiropractor, dentist, or other appropriate licensed health care or mental health professional;
- b) Due to religious instruction for the student or religious holidays of the student's own faith to be observed by the student, when the absence is requested in writing by a parent or guardian at least three (3) school days in advance of the absence, as delineated in Rule 6A-1.09514, Florida Administrative Code.

- c) Due to a medical, chiropractic, dental, or other appointment with a licensed professional related to the physical or mental health of the student, when the appointment cannot be scheduled outside of school hours and when written documentation is provided by the parent or guardian prior to the scheduled appointment;
- d) Due to attendance at an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meeting at which the student's educational program is the topic;
- e) Due to attendance in an administrative or judicial proceeding which involves the student as a witness or as the subject of the proceeding;
- f) Due to a death in the immediate family of the student and such absence does not exceed seven (7) school days;
- g) Due to placement in The Florida Keys Children's Shelter and such placement transition period does not exceed three (3) school days. (By the fourth day, Shelter personnel are required to enroll the student in the appropriate public school closest in geographic proximity to the Shelter.)
- h) With written permission of the principal or the principal's designee, for good cause shown, including insurmountable conditions as defined by rules of the state board of education in Rule 6A-1.09513, Florida Administrative Code.
- i) Due to participation in an approved special event. The student must receive advance written permission from the school principal or the principal's designee. (Examples of special events include public functions; conferences; and regional, state and national competitions).
- j) Due to having, or being suspected of having, a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted to other students or school staff. (Examples include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, and scabies.)

An "unexcused" absence is any absence that does not fall into one of the above excused absence categories.

Each parent or guardian of a student at May Sands Montessori School:

- Is responsible for maintaining his or her child's regular attendance at school, and is required to submit justification for each absence.
- Must report the absence to the school office the day before, the day of, or within two school days following the absence. The absence will be considered unexcused if not reported within the established timeframe.
- Has a responsibility to notify the school and request information on homebound instruction if the student is expected to miss at least 15 consecutive school days due to illness, medical condition, or social/emotional reasons, or if the student is expected to be absent intermittently throughout the school year for the same reasons.
- Has a right to be notified if the student misses school and the parent or guardian has not reported the absence to the school.
- Is responsible, if the student is to be homeschooled, for requesting information concerning homeschooling, notifying the school principal or principal's designee that the student will be home schooled, and withdrawing the student from May Sands Montessori School in accordance with the school's withdrawal procedures.

1003.21 Florida Statutes provides that all children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year, or who are older than six years of age but who have not yet attained the age of 16 years, except as hereinafter provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. Students less than 16 years of age may not be withdrawn from school for any reason unless:

- a) The student is dismissed through charter school board action;
- b) The student is specifically exempted by Florida law from attending a public school; or
- c) The student is transferring his or her enrollment to another school, home education program, or private tutoring program in accordance with Florida law.

Enforcement of student attendance is the responsibility of the administration and staff of the School; every student's absence shall be recorded and reported. Student attendance records shall be maintained in accordance with Section 1003.26 and in accordance with School policies and administrative procedures. Student attendance reporting for the May Sands Montessori School is completed electronically through the use of Monroe County School District's FOCUS Student database.

The potential consequences for a student who does not attend school as required by law may include:

- Contacting the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) and to schedule a conference concerning the student's non-attendance.
- Implementing truancy interventions by the Student Service Team as required by law.
- Adverse grades and penalties for course work and class assignments.

Each classroom teacher shall be responsible for checking, accurately documenting and reporting the presence, absence, or tardiness of students assigned to that teacher's class, activity, or event.

The principal or principal's designee shall take appropriate action in a timely manner (by the end of the following school day) for each unexcused absence or absence for which the reason is unknown. As a minimum, the student's parent or guardian shall be contacted to determine the reason for the absence. Initial contact may be made through the following means as available and as applicable to the information specified in the student database for parental contact: personal phone call, written notice emailed to parent, or written notice sent with student to home. The principal or principal's designee will evaluate the reasons given and the circumstances relating to the student's absence to determine if the absence is an excused or unexcused absence. If the absence is excused, the student must be allowed to make up assigned work. The classroom teacher shall be responsible for providing make-up assignments for excused absences.

If a student has five unexcused absences or absences for which the reason is unknown within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences within a 90-calendar-day period, the primary teacher must report to the principal or the principal's designee that the child may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. The principal or the principal's designee may refer the case to the Student Service Team to determine if there is a developing pattern of nonattendance. The Student Service Team may also review patterns of excessive excused absences or a combination of excused and unexcused absences.

If the Student Service Team determines that early patterns of truancy are developing or if the Student Services Team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent or guardian must be scheduled to identify interventions to remediate the situation.

A notice will be sent to the parent or guardian. This notice will include information related to the truancy and the date, time, and location of the parent conference to address this student's nonattendance issues.

The parent/guardian conference will focus on remediation of the underlying causes of the student's nonattendance, and parents/guardians will also be provided with information regarding the potential consequences to both the student and the parent/guardian for continued nonattendance.

If the initial meeting with the parent does not resolve the issue, the Student Service Team shall implement interventions which may include, but are not limited to:

- Student counseling;
- Frequent communication between the teacher and the family;

- Changes in the learning environment;
- Attendance contracts;
- Referral to other agencies for family services;
- Mentoring;
- Tutoring;
- Peer tutoring;
- Class or schedule changes, or
- other changes in the learning environment;
- Evaluation for alternative education programs
- Other interventions, including, but not limited to, recommending to the Superintendent, through the school principal, that a truancy petition be filed.

The Lead Guide will be responsible for documenting parent contacts, parent conference and parent/student interventions in the student's cumulative file.

All students are required to attend the first 10 days of school. Failure to report to school on the first day of class, and attend for ten consecutive class days, shall jeopardize the student's enrollment, potentially resulting in withdrawal from the school. Situations involving personal or medical necessity shall be the only exemptions from automatic withdrawal. Any student who is absent from the program over 10 consecutive days during the school year may also be withdrawn from the program. Each parent or guardian will be notified of his/her child's non-attendance status and provided the opportunity to justify the absence within three (3) days. The parent or guardian has the right to appeal to the Charter School Board of Directors if he/she is dissatisfied with the determination made by the Principal.

Calendars

All school calendars are available on the schools website at www.MaySandsMontessori.com or at the front office upon request.

Celebrations

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their school friends. Your child's guide will discuss birthday celebrations at the first class meeting. If you have questions, please contact them via email.

We request families send birthday party invitations through the mail, rather than through the school communication system. If you need addresses (email or otherwise) please contact our front office for a released contact list.

School Dress

Students may dress casually and in a manner that is not distracting, extreme, or disruptive to the educational process. Students who violate the established dress code must remain in the school office until appropriate clothing is delivered and put on. The following standards are established to assist students in selecting appropriate apparel for school:

- Dresses, skirts, and shorts must reach the tip of the thumb, the natural extended reach of one's arm

- Shirts, blouses, and tank tops must cover the entire torso; crop tops are not permitted
- Clothing must not reveal undergarments
- Bathing suits are inappropriate for school except for physical education swimming activities.
- Closed-toe shoes are preferred for running, walking, and playing on the playground, and are required for all off-campus activities
- Flip-flops and shoes without backs are not permitted
- Hats and sunglasses are for outdoor use, only
- Clothing or accessories imprinted with alcoholic or tobacco product endorsements or rude statements are not permitted.

The Principal is authorized to act on specific cases, which disrupt good order and school discipline.

Electronic Devices

Personal electronic devices are becoming a part of our everyday culture. Some parents require their young children to have communication devices to make sure they made it to/from school safely. As this is a very important tool for parents to utilize, here at school it is the expectation that electronic devices are completely off and stored with the classroom teacher. This is because these devices cause distractions to young people and the school provides technology for students to utilize during the day if needed. If a student needs to call home, they can ask to go to the office and use the landline to call. These items include, but are not limited to: cellphones, smartwatches, and tablets. If a child is seen utilizing these devices while on campus, the device will be confiscated by the adult and turned in to the principal. The parent/custodial guardian will need to personally come to the school to pick up the item.

Lost and Found

We strongly suggest that all items your child bring to school are labeled clearly with their first and last names. In the event that your child misplaces something, please check in with our Front Desk to see if the item has been turned in. Every quarter, all unclaimed items will be donated to the local Goodwill.

Lunches

Our school community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness program. We rely on parent support to help teach the students about health and nutrition.

Students should be a part of the lunch making process. This not only teaches responsibility and encourages independence, but also increases the chances that the student will eat what goes to school with them.

Sugary desserts are not appropriate for school lunch. **Gum, candy, soda, cookies, cupcakes, and beverages other than water/flavored water are not permitted.** If these items are sent to school, they will be sent back home in the child's lunch box. For children of which this happens often, the classroom Lead Guide will reach out to the family to discuss the lunch policy.

Students who bring lunch to school must have a labeled lunch box. Many foods can be heated at home and packed in a thermos, which will keep warm until lunchtime. We encourage the use of reusable or recyclable containers so that students can take home any uneaten food.

May Sands Montessori School contracts with the Monroe County School District (MCSD) for school food service and the menu is adapted for our school facilities. Key West High School cafeteria prepares meals for our school. Each year, families must complete a meal application and set up an account through the MCSD's meal payment portal. Families can find the portal on our school website.

Snack

Community snack is provided to all students in Primary through Upper Elementary. Each Family will be responsible for purchasing community snack for the class 1-2 times during the school year. The Lead Guide in each class will reach out to the families one week beforehand and give a list of items that are needed. Encourage your child to go with you to pick out the items. If you cannot for some reason take care of community snack, please let your Lead Guide know ASAP so another family can be informed. This will count as 1 service hour for the year each time it is done.

Community, Respect & Discipline

The School-Home Partnership

Communication

The May Sands Montessori School recognizes the importance of communication, and we encourage family participation in our school community. The Principal and all classroom guides are available by appointment to address parent needs.

During the school year, we will send home newsletters, announcements, notes and flyers. Email is our general method of communication; thank you for regularly checking your email. Check and remove all papers from your child's folder and return it promptly to school. In addition, class meetings are scheduled throughout the year to provide parents with pertinent information regarding curriculum, philosophy and other important topics relating to education. The school is part of the Monroe County School District Connect-Ed system. In the event of school closures or emergency situations, you will receive a phone notification via a recorded message.

The most effective way to communicate with school staff is by email, which will usually be addressed within 24 hours. Our front office assistant is the best point of contact for communication needs during school hours, as the instructional staff is attending to students' needs between 8:00 a.m. and 3:15 p.m.

Please address all classroom and curriculum questions to your child's lead guide.

For grievances regarding school-related issues, parents are encouraged to speak with the Parent Liaison, whose contact information is available in the main office and on our school website.

Office Hours

The School office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on school days, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday during summer break. The office is closed during winter break, spring break and on holidays. The school telephone number is 305.293.1400, ext. 53418

Conferences

Formal Parent/Guide conferences are held at least twice a year, typically in October and February. Student progress in our program is discussed at these conferences. Parents are required to attend these two formal conferences.

Progress Reports

Formal progress reports are presented two times a year. The Guides base these reports on student observations and student work. Emphasis is not placed on achieving a "grade", rather, the students' progress toward understanding of concepts. Additionally, each student will create a portfolio collection of his or her best and favorite work from the school year into a permanent portfolio binder. Students in

Upper Elementary and all Early Secondary program students will receive formal grades based on proficiency in curricular studies in addition to formal reports.

Observations

A parent may make an appointment with the Guide or the Administrative Team for observation in the classroom. The best time to observe is during the morning Work Cycle. You will want to see the class in its normal routine and not respond to the novelty of your presence. Therefore when you visit, please sit in the designated Visitor's Chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of the children at work. A follow-up conference should be scheduled after an observation.

During the first sensitive month of the school year, students are establishing their routines and familiarizing themselves with the learning environment. The Guide and students are building their community of learners. For this reason, we ask that parents avoid class observations during the first month of school.

All visitors and volunteers need to sign in and obtain a visitor name tag from the office upon arrival.

Thank you for remembering to silence your cell phone before entering any classroom.

Responsibilities of Families

Families agree to honor the Family School Commitment, by:

- Attending all scheduled parent/classroom guide conferences per year.
- Attending the three scheduled all-school community meetings.
- Checking your child's Communication folder every week.
- Accepting and abiding by the rules and regulations set by the board of directors which are designed for smooth operation.
- Giving 25 hours of volunteer service, per school year, with five of the hours dedicated to fundraising efforts which include annual gala raffle tickets (20 sold per family).
- Participating in at least one of the following committees:

| | | |
|-------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Bylaws | Hospitality/Social | Public Relations |
| Finance | House & Grounds | Staffing |
| Fundraising | Parent Involvement | |
| Grants | Planning & Development | |

Service hours may not be converted to monetary donations. It is understood that all families must perform the required service to the school, and must provide a record of their service to the school which is found on our schools website.

Contract of Commitment

This contract is an agreement between the school and the family stating the terms of the family's commitment to be fully involved in their child's education at the school. Such involvement will include, but not be limited to, volunteer hours, parent education, etc.

Families of eligible children must be willing to make an extraordinary commitment to their child's education. Commitment to the May Sands Montessori School mission and educational philosophy manifests itself in the signing of the Family School Commitment.

It is necessary for parents and educators to unite together to create a healthy, enriching and stimulating environment for children. Without this drive to promote the child's development and to encourage him/her to reach his/her full potential, alternative public schools such as the May Sands Montessori School and other special school programs would not exist; nor would the genius of the work of Dr. Montessori herself.

When schools and families work together in this endeavor, goals are manifested and reached. It is the joint ambition of May Sands Montessori School and of the parents to give each child the best education possible. Education of this caliber takes true dedication on the part of the school as well as the family. Because of this ambition, we must make our expectations and promises clear and understood. Upon application, the school asks the families of our children to read and accept the terms of our Family School Commitment.

Enforceability

Consistent with F.S. 1002.33(10)(e)5, the parent volunteer contract is enforceable under Florida law, and failure of a parent or legal guardian to uphold or fulfill their responsibilities under said contract would be sufficient grounds for denial of admission to the school the following year. As a public school of choice, the May Sands Montessori School relies on a strong home-to-school connection for the success of its program. Failure on the part of the family to uphold the contract of commitment jeopardizes not only the school's overall performance, but may affect the child's educational potential as well. Families will be notified in writing of the consequence for non-fulfillment of the Contract of Commitment, which is placement of his/her child/children in the lottery drawing, to determine enrollment for the coming school year. A parent or legal guardian may request benevolence from the Charter Board of Directors, who will address cases of hardship on a case-by-case basis.

System of Justness

Our goal is to maintain a positive and peaceful environment for all children on an equal playing field. Children are expected to demonstrate respect for self, others, and the environment through grace and courtesy towards all members of the May Sands Montessori School Community. Child behavior should be exhibited in ways that ensure optimal safety, educational, and social emotional well-being for everyone in the learning community.

Nautilus Approach

One of Dr. Montessori's revolutionary insights about children is the power of work to construct the personality. So what can we do to ensure that all children, including those presenting challenging behaviors, have equitable access to work opportunities and to show up as their whole self? How do we as adults engage in self-preparation, build strong relationships with all of our children, and understand how to reconnect them to work?

The Nautilus Approach is a framework for proactive and responsive support for the whole school through fidelity to the Montessori method, respectful relationships with children, and support for children who need it most. It offers step-by-step guidance to reconnection to work through set phases during which the child is always welcome to return to their work. The Nautilus Approach replaces the traditional "discipline/behavior policy". Like the Montessori method, it is a constructivist approach, focuses on the whole-human, and aims to reconnect the child to their environment. Children have big feelings and are encouraged to share them whenever possible in appropriate manners through guidance and role modeling from the adults in their environment. When these feelings occur in the classroom, guidance from the adults is necessary in a more direct manner. The adults in the room will follow a questioning process of the child to bring their awareness to the situation at hand. If the child experiences escalated feelings and are not able to return to their work, they will be received by another adult in the room and calmly spoken to about the situation again. If at this time the child is still having big feelings and cannot return to work, a Nautilus Team Member will be asked to step in and work with the child yet again. If this still does not assist the child with a sense of closure and a return to work, they will be taken to another area to calm themselves with the Nautilus Team Member and begin the repair process. Once the child is capable of returning to the

classroom environment ready to work, the Lead Guide will welcome them back and redirect them to their work.

Parents will be contacted if their child needs assistance from the Nautilus Team. A Referral form will be filled out by the Lead Guide and given to the parent via email and hard copy. If necessary, a phone call will be made as well. Children may present with repeated behaviors and through observation and documentation, Lead Guides will contact parents for a conference to discuss a plan for their child.

Many times, a child just needs to hear that an adult is listening and showing that they are there to assist them and they will find a resolution quickly. The goal is to keep the child in the classroom where they feel comfortable and return them to an engaged work cycle.

Tools that Lead Guides may use with children to aid in calming or minimizing sensory input may be used with students, but only after parental consent has been requested in writing or through digital communications. These items can include but are not limited to:

- Noise canceling headphones
- Wiggle seats/Howda chairs
- Weighted blankets/vests

In the event a child cannot find a resolution or calm down within an appropriate amount of time, the parent will be called and asked to pick their child up from school. The day the child returns, they will meet with the Lead Guide and be welcomed back to the classroom.

Responding to Extreme or Continued Negative Behaviors

Repeated instances of inappropriate behavior will be documented by noting the behavior, date, and time on a Referral Form. Our goal is to maintain a positive and peaceful environment for all students. Physical or verbal aggression or violence will not be tolerated. If this occurs at school, the student will be sent home. A parent conference will be required before the student is readmitted to class.

The principal may suspend a student from school for willful disobedience, open defiance of a staff member's authority, use of profane or obscene language, other serious misconduct, or repeated misconduct of a less serious nature. Parents will be notified in writing of the reasons for suspension and shall be provided with an opportunity for a conference within 24 hours of the effective date of the suspension.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school/expelled.

In order for our school community to run effectively, we will be following the Code of Conduct for Students as outlined by the Monroe County School District. The specific language is below to be very clear and concise with all Families and students.

LEVEL I DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS

Level I Behaviors are acts that disrupt the orderly operation of the classroom, school function, and extracurricular activities or approved transportation.

- Cheating/ Plagiarism
- Confrontation with another student / Physical contact (minor)/physical aggression
- Defiance / Disrespect / Non-compliance / Insubordination
- Disruptive behavior (including behavior on the school bus and at the school bus stop)
- Inappropriate display of affection
- Inappropriate language (general, not directed at someone)
- Inappropriate location / Out of bounds area
- Pattern of non-attendance - Skip Class/Tardy
- Possession/display of inappropriate items or materials*
- Prohibited sales on school grounds (other than controlled substances)
- Minor Bus Infraction
- Tease /Taunt
- Technology Violation

*See Sexual Offenses (other), Level IV, for obscene or lewd materials. Administrators must contact law enforcement for any criminal conduct. If the victim of a crime requests a police report, the principal or designee must report the incident to law enforcement.

RANGE OF CORRECTIVE STRATEGIES

The principal or designee must select at least one of the following strategies from PLAN I. Principals may authorize use of PLAN II for repeated, serious or habitual LEVEL I infractions.

PLAN I

- Alternative to suspension**
- Behavior Plan
- Confiscation of electronic/communication devices
- Detention or other Board approved in-school program
- In school suspension
- Loss of privileges
- Parent/Guardian contact**
- Participation in an informal counseling session related to the infraction
- Peer mediation
- Replacement or payment for any damaged property (if appropriate)
- Reprimand
- Restorative Practices
- Revocation of the right to participate in social and/or extracurricular activities
- Saturday School
- Student contract
- Student, parents/guardians/staff conference
- Temporary assignment from class where the infraction occurred
- Temporary loss of bus privileges (if appropriate)

**Good faith attempt must be made immediately to contact parent/guardian by telephone.

LEVEL II SERIOUSLY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS

Level II Behaviors are more serious than Level I because they significantly interfere with learning and/or the wellbeing of others.

- Pattern or intensity of any Level I Behavior
- Bullying (repeated harassment)
- Confrontation with a staff member
- Distribution of items or materials that are inappropriate for an educational setting *
- Failure to comply with previously prescribed corrective strategies
- Fighting (minor) / Physical Aggression
- Harassment (law enforcement not involved)
- Inappropriate language / Abusive language / Profanity
- Leaving school grounds without permission / Elopement
- Possession and/or use of tobacco products**
- Property destruction / Vandalism (under \$1000.00)
- Transient threat against an individual on school grounds

*See Sexual Offenses (Other), Level IV, for obscene or lewd materials.

** See Drug Prevention for definition of tobacco products

Administrators must contact law enforcement for any criminal conduct. If the victim of a crime requests a police report, the principal or designee must report the incident to law enforcement.

RANGE OF CORRECTIVE STRATEGIES

The principal or designee must select at least one of the following strategies from PLAN II. The use or appropriate strategies from a previous PLAN may be used in conjunction with the PLAN. Principals may authorize the use of PLAN III for repeated, serious or habitual Level II infractions.

PLAN II

- Alternative to suspension**
- In school suspension
- Loss of privileges
- Parent/guardian contact**
- Restorative Practices/School-based program
- Suspension from school for one to five days***
- Saturday School

**Good faith attempt must be made immediately to contact the parent/guardian by telephone.

***Send written notice to parent/guardian within 24 hours via U.S. mail. A manifestation hearing must take place for any exceptional education student nearing 10 days for suspension from school.

LEVEL III OFFENSIVE/HARMFUL BEHAVIORS

Level III Behaviors are more serious than Level II because they endanger health and safety, damage property, and/or cause serious disruptions to the learning environment.

- Pattern or intensity of any Level I or II Behavior
- Battery •Contraband
- Disruption on campus/Disorderly conduct (major)
- False fire alarm/bomb threat
- Fighting (serious)
- Hazing (misdemeanor)
- Larceny/Theft (under \$750.00)
- Other Major Offenses
- Possession or use of simulated weapons
- Possession or use of controlled substances*
- Sexual harassment
- Substantive threat against an individual on school grounds
- Trespassing
- Vandalism (\$1,000.00 or more)

* See Drug Prevention

Administrators must contact law enforcement for any criminal conduct. If the victim of a crime requests a police report, the principal or designee must report the incident to law enforcement. The principal or designee must select at least one of the following strategies from PLAN III. The use of appropriate strategies from previous PLANs may also be used in conjunction with this PLAN. Principals may authorize the use of PLAN IV for repeated, serious or habitual Level III infractions.

PLAN III

- Alternative to suspension**
- Complete threat assessment and action plan
- Parent/guardian contact**
- Permanent removal from class (placement review committee decision may be required) •Recommendation for alternative educational setting
- Recommendation for expulsion
- Restorative Practices/School-based program
- Suspension from school for one to ten days***

**Good faith attempt must be made immediately to contact parent/guardian by telephone.

***Send written notice to parent/guardian within 24 hours via U.S. mail. A manifestation hearing must take place for any exceptional education student nearing 10 days for suspension from school.

LEVEL IV DANGEROUS OR VIOLENT BEHAVIORS

Level IV Behaviors are more serious acts of unacceptable behavior than Level III. They seriously endanger the health and well-being of others and/or damage property.

- Pattern or intensity of any level I, II, or III behavior
- Battery on school staff
- Breaking & Entering/Burglary
- Hate crime
- Other major crimes/incidents
- Physical Attack
- Robbery
- Sale and/or distribution of controlled substances
- Sex offenses (other) (including possession and/or distribution of obscene or lewd materials)
- Sexual Assault
- Use/possession of weapon

Administrators must contact law enforcement for any criminal conduct. If the victim of a crime requests a police report, the principal or designee must report the incident to law enforcement.

RANGE OF CORRECTIVE STRATEGIES

The principal or designee must select at least one of the following strategies from PLAN IV. The use of appropriate strategies from previous PLANs may also be used in conjunction with this PLAN. Principals may authorize the use of PLAN IV for repeated, serious or habitual Level III infractions.

PLAN IV

- Complete substantive threat assessment and action plan
- Parent/guardian contact**
- Recommendation for expulsion
- Referral for alternative educational setting
- Restorative Practices/School-based program
- Suspension from school for one to ten days***

**Good faith attempt must be made immediately to contact parent/guardian by telephone.

***Send written notice to parent/guardian within 24 hours via U.S. mail. A manifestation hearing must take place for any exceptional education student nearing 10 days for suspension from school.

LEVEL V MOST SERIOUS, DANGEROUS OR VIOLENT BEHAVIORS

Level V Behaviors are the most serious acts of misconduct and violent actions that threaten life.

- Pattern or intensity of any behavior
- Aggravated Battery
- Armed robbery
- Arson
- Homicide
- Kidnapping/Abduction
- Possession, use, sale or distribution of firearms, explosives, destructive devices and other weapons*
- Sexual Battery

Administrators must contact law enforcement. The possession of firearms or other weapons on school property may result in criminal penalties in addition to expulsion. *One year expulsion is recommended.

RANGE OF CORRECTIVE STRATEGIES

The principal or designee must use the following strategies from PLAN V. The use of appropriate strategies from previous PLANs may also be used in Conjunction with this PLAN.

PLAN V

Complete substantive threat assessment and action plan Parent/guardian contact**

Recommendation for expulsion Referral for alternative educational setting

Suspension from school for one to ten days***

**Good faith attempt must be made immediately to contact parent/guardian by telephone.

***Send written notice to parent/guardian within 24 hours via U.S. mail. A manifestation hearing must take place for any exceptional education student nearing 10 days for suspension from school. This level of infraction may result in an expulsion requiring School Board action.

The Educational Program

The Method

Our educational program is rooted in Montessori philosophy, and maintains a vision toward advances in education. Through close and careful observation, Maria Montessori developed a method of educating children that placed the individual needs of the child as the foundation for learning. Three components of Montessori's discoveries serve as our educational cornerstone: the Four Planes of Development, Cosmic Education, and the Universal Human Tendencies.

The Four Planes of Development

Upon understanding that all humans need to make sense of their environment, Maria Montessori realized the existence of stages in human development that were unique to the individual. Montessori believed that humans developed in a series of four stages, and suggested propensities toward the acquisition of certain knowledge existed within each stage. Maria Montessori created the concept of the Four Planes of Development based on her many years of observing children. Within each of these planes, exist periods of time in which the individual is particularly sensitive to acquiring information in a particular manner. The passage to the second level of education is the passage from sensorial, concrete exploration of the world to abstract exploration of knowledge. The child in the second plane of development (approximately 7 - 12 years old) possesses an abstract mind and seeks to find purpose and reason behind knowledge. It is believed that by creating a sense of compassion, global awareness and our connection to nature, we can instill in children sociological and ecological values that will benefit them in the future.

Cosmic Education

Maria Montessori stated that for the elementary child it is "the power of imagination that educates". She designed a curriculum that presented a vision of the universe to the child in the form of an engaging impressionistic story. This provides a large narrative framework for the children's later knowledge. Studies of all branches of science are integrated into this framework. In addition to the academic curriculum, the May Sands Montessori School believes in teaching cosmic education - the knowledge of humanity's relationship to the universe. The goal of Cosmic Education is to develop a global vision within the child along with gratitude for the universe and their lives within it.

"If everything in the universe came about from the same source – the original fireball that many believe preceded the creation of the stars – then we as human beings are related to all other human beings, as well as to the animals, plants, oceans, and heavenly bodies. Therefore if we deliberately destroy nature or harm other living beings we might be ultimately destroying ourselves."

- Aline Wolf, Nurturing the Human Spirit

Universal Human Tendencies

Dr. Maria Montessori was not only an educator, but a keen anthropological observer as well. Montessori's studies in anthropology enabled her to reflect on the behaviors of early humans, correlate similar behaviors with those of the humans of her time, and develop a pedagogy based on the following universal human

tendencies: exploration, orientation, order, imagination, manipulation, repetition, precision, control of error leading to perfection, and communication.

Dr. Montessori believed education should correspond to the child's developmental periods, and guides should apply their knowledge of human tendencies when working with children. The May Sands Montessori School operates on the understanding of the universal human tendencies and promotes learning through exploration of the prepared environment. The role of the guide is to continue to adapt the environment and facilitate exploration while observing and assessing the child's individual needs.

The May Sands Montessori School acknowledges the importance of the prepared environment and offers:

- An integration of the arts, sciences, geography, history, and language that inspires students to seek knowledge for personal satisfaction.
- The presentation of knowledge as part of a large scale narrative in which the origins of the earth, life, human communities (agricultural and urban), empires, and modern history unfolds, always in the context of the wholeness of life.
- The presentation of formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc. that exposes the child to accurate, organized information while respecting the child's intelligence and interests.
- The use of timelines, pictures, charts, and other visual aids, to provide a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of each discipline.
- A mathematics curriculum presented with concrete materials that simultaneously reveal arithmetic, geometric and algebraic correlations.
- An emphasis on open-ended research and in-depth study that uses primary and secondary sources, such as books, as well as other materials.
- "Going-out" which entails the ongoing use of community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The Materials

Montessori materials make up a large portion of the primary and elementary prepared environments. These manipulative materials have been scientifically designed and tested. In our Primary and Elementary classrooms, you will find a visual representation of the knowledge to be explored. There is a variety of materials within the scope of learning any concept. Each student is able to have many varied experiences manipulating materials, enabling exploration and discovery of concepts. Dr. Montessori developed the materials to be self-correcting, which enables the student to experience independence in her/his environment.

In a Montessori classroom there is an emphasis placed on research for even the youngest elementary school students. Research builds a framework for creative thinking and exploration. Through research, students learn the varied means of gaining and evaluating information and how to use reference materials.

The Guide

The guide is a catalyst for learning and observes as the student chooses his/her activities. Dr. Montessori valued the role of the prepared educator in the learning environment. In the Montessori classroom, the role of the guide is to continue to adapt to the environment and facilitate exploration while observing and assessing the student's individual needs; the guide is the link between the student and the environment.

By implementing observation techniques, the guide is able to meet the individual needs and interests of each student. The guide is dedicated to the development of students who are self-disciplined, cooperative, responsible, creative thinkers of the community and world. Along with preparing students to be productive members of society, the guide strives to provide solid foundations in intellectual growth, humanitarianism, and peace.

Instructional Methods

We believe learning environments should accommodate the sensitive periods Dr. Montessori realized in order to meet the universal human tendencies. Maria Montessori believed that human development was an internal process that manifested outwardly over time. It is important to relate the context of Montessori's universal human tendencies to the creation of learning environments to facilitate an environment that is rich in educational possibilities. It is for this reason that an understanding of the Montessori curriculum is needed.

Curriculum

The Montessori curriculum is best described as an integration of subjects that spiral in depth of content over the span of the multi-age cycle within each program level. In addition to core subject areas of Geography, Geometry, History, Language Arts, Mathematics, and the branches of Science, Montessori education includes practical life lessons as well as peace education.

Geography

Even the youngest student in the Montessori classroom has experience with physical and cultural geography. First lessons with the globe provide primary program students with an awareness of the differentiation between the Earth's water and the continents. The use of continent puzzle maps – present throughout the primary and elementary learning environments – provide further discovery of physical geography and offer a thematic focus for studying biomes and cultural geography. Early Secondary program students expand their knowledge of physical geography by developing a thorough understanding of the Earth's geologic composition, which has affected its physical structure over time. At this program level, economic and cultural geography are also studied through the divergent lenses of history and current events, which provides opportunity to engage in scholarly debate.

Geometry

The study of geometric shapes begins with concrete objects in the primary Montessori program, and carries forward throughout the Early Secondary program in a more abstract, complex and analytical manner. Identification and classification of plane figures and solid geometric shapes become the work of the primary Montessori student. Geometry studies for the elementary program level include definitions and properties of plane and solid shapes, and expanded forms of plane shapes (i.e. types of triangles and polygons). The study of nomenclature to describe specific aspects of geometric shapes is the work of elementary program level students, which lead to measurement and manipulation of shapes as they progress in their studies.

History

In a Montessori elementary classroom, the first lessons of history are presented in narrative form, beginning with the scientific theory of the origin of our universe. Dr. Montessori held firm to the belief that children whose imaginations were engaged would be more apt to learn. Studies of the history of our mother planet lend a strong connection to the science of zoology, and embedded in these studies is a component of the curriculum that provides the etymological origins of language. The study of early humans and how our species evolved is a concept that is presented throughout the elementary program years. Discussions on the fundamental needs of humans provide opportunities for the study of early civilizations and potential correlations to current day issues. The use of timelines is a key component of Montessori education, and enables students to place facts from any discipline in a linear progression. In this regard, history is not a separate subject, but a manner in which one organizes content in linear form.

Language Arts

Dr. Montessori understood that the sensitive period for developing language occurred from birth through approximately age six. It is for this reason that the primary environment holds a wealth of materials to provide experiences for the development of spoken and written language. Early lessons in phonemes form the basis of the language curriculum in the primary environment. Students experience letters and sounds through multi-modal forms of sandpaper letters, objects and modeling. Once the phonemic coding is in place, students build on their knowledge by using the moveable alphabet for word building and the study of phonemic blends for vocabulary development. Literacy is an integral component of all subject areas; nomenclature cards are prevalent throughout the Montessori curriculum, and provide students with varying levels of matching words, objects and definitions. Instructional Guides at all program levels provide regular opportunities for listening to stories, which helps to build sustained focus and comprehension in pre-readers, and an appreciation for literary genres and the spoken word in older students. Composition is the written form of language, and is encouraged from the very first lessons of phonemic development. Formal instruction in handwriting emerges as a result of repeated practice with the sandpaper letters, which supports proper letter formation. As students progress through their Montessori experience, they develop a wider working vocabulary (e.g. personal dictionaries), begin to study grammar (e.g. functions of the parts of speech), and take part in literature circles or shared reading groups to build skill in reading and critical thinking.

Mathematics

Montessori developed materials to teach a specific concept in practical form, and provided opportunity for independent exploration by making these materials self-correcting. The Montessori Math curriculum begins with concrete representation of quantity and symbol, and contains a variety of materials that progress in complexity of concept to enable students to move toward abstraction. Mathematics in the primary environment offers an introduction to the decimal system in an inviting and interactive form known as the Golden Bead Material. Young students begin composing numbers into the thousands through manipulation of the materials and in connection to the symbols presented by the Instructional Guide. The Bead Cabinet is also a learning tool introduced in the primary environment, but is used throughout the elementary program, as well. The Bead Cabinet is perhaps the most versatile Montessori Math material; for it provides students with a concrete form of linear counting that also incorporates skip

counting, multiples, and the square and cube of numbers. The use of bead bars, which were developed in the same fashion as those in the Bead Cabinet are used throughout the elementary Math curriculum to support student learning of mathematical operations. As students become proficient with mathematical concepts, the reliance on representative materials subsides. Students in the Upper Elementary and Early Secondary learning environments are more able to complete their studies in abstract format, though there exist occasions when a return to the concrete materials is needed to reintroduce or reinforce a concept.

Branches of Science

The Montessori Science curriculum is interwoven with history, mathematics and language, and begins with a descriptive overview of the origin of our universe. Progressing from this first impressionistic lesson, students learn about types and formation of galaxies, the composition of stars, the planets that form our solar system, the formation of Earth, and the composition of our planet. Further lessons draw upon physical science concepts such as the states of matter, exploration of elements and compounds, and basic atomic theory. The study of plants and animals is also a part of the curricular web that flows through all Montessori program levels. Primary students learn classification of living and non-living organisms, and begin learning the differing characteristics of plants & animals. The Science curriculum progresses to identifying the parts of plants and animals, as well as more advanced classification of animals, and eventually to the biological characteristics that differentiate the propagation of animal species. Students in the elementary and early secondary program levels learn about the interrelationships of living organisms through lessons in ecology and environmental science, which also provide opportunities to study chemistry and revisit molecular theory. The branches of science are interrelated in the Montessori curriculum, and the progression of the spiral depth of knowledge is quite evident throughout the academic program levels.

Practical Life

Dr. Montessori held to the belief of education as an aid to life, and created activities for the young Montessori student that developed fine motor control, coordination and courtesy. While most of the practical life lessons are introduced in the Primary program and provide exercises in gaining fine motor precision, older Montessori students' practical life activities expand to include real world activities. As the student sweeps up pencil shavings, in the active care for the school's plants, or through the preparation of communal snacks, Montessori students are developing independence in their environment.

Peace Education

Montessori education places a great deal of emphasis on peace. At May Sands Montessori School we commit to supporting the development of the whole child – one who will make positive contributions in society through their character as much as their academic skill. Early lessons in grace and courtesy provide the framework for a peaceful and connected learning environment. Students are guided in practical life activities that require sharing, taking turns, active listening, and respect. Students develop these characteristics through active participation in their environment and the classroom becomes a community of peacekeepers.

Presentation of Lessons

The guide generally presents lessons in brief, small group presentations. The lessons utilize Montessori materials, hand-made materials, nomenclature booklets and cards, and more traditional education tools (such as microscopes and thermometers). The plan for the composition of small groups involves consideration of student abilities, interest, and prior experience with the content to be presented. Students who are familiar with the lesson may serve as peer guides. After each lesson is presented there are a variety of follow-up activities, which enable the student to gain mastery of the concept presented. There are also extension activities, games, and other materials that can be introduced to revitalize interest and which engender mastery of the concept. Nomenclature is an integral component of many lessons. The traditional style of presenting nomenclature follows the Montessori Three-Part Lesson. The first part of the lesson requires the guide to present the nomenclature (e.g., “This is the isosceles triangle”). The second part asks the student for comprehension of the nomenclature while naming it (e.g., “Show me the isosceles triangle”). The third part asks the student to show comprehension of the nomenclature without assistance (e.g., “What is this triangle called?”), thus checking for mastery of the nomenclature. This type of lesson is used to give vocabulary in any subject as well as for learning non-phonetic words. The Three-Part Lesson allows the guide to quickly assess individual student comprehension, and the student is actively involved in the learning process. The brevity of the lesson allows the student to explore and manipulate the material, which leads toward mastery of the subject. The Three-Part Lesson follows the natural progression of learning, asking for information only when the student has demonstrated that he/she understands, thus ensuring more confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

Freedom and Responsibility

Freedom and responsibility are an integral part of the Montessori environment. Students are active participants in their academic success. The adult is responsible for setting limits in a firm, fair, and consistent manner. Students are free to make choices within those limits. They are responsible for accepting the consequences of their choices, which leads to the development of self-discipline. This freedom develops the ability of the child to make reasoned choices based on a framework of self-discipline that has been developed over time.

Assessment/Evaluation

In the Montessori Environment Lead Guides have the opportunity to constantly assess what students know based on their observations of student engagement and activity throughout the day. Guides keep meticulous records on each student and are able to meet the student where they are academically, socially and emotionally.

In addition to observation, May Sands uses an in-house assessment system that the Monroe County School District uses called Renaissance STAR testing. This is a progress monitoring tool that allows the instructional team to use in conjunction with classroom performance to assess where students are. These assessments will be shared with families at our two conferences during the year.

This year will begin the Progress Monitoring through the State of Florida and will look very similar to the Progress Monitoring tools that we already use. Our VPK-2nd grade will continue to use the STAR assessments and our 3rd-8th graders will use a new program called Cambium to access the materials. These assessments will collect 3 data points throughout the year to see annual growth of students.*

*The state of Florida will release more information that will be available on our school website as it becomes available.

Student Placement, Progression, Promotion and Retention

Children should be placed in the educational setting most appropriate to their personal, social, physical, and educational needs. Each student shall be moved forward in a continuous pattern of achievement and growth, consistent with Montessori philosophy.

Appropriate student school and grade level placement, as well as completion of required immunization and physical examination, shall occur within 30 days of enrollment. A student enrolled in the May Sands Montessori School will be promoted to the next grade level when s/he has completed the course(s) and demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the State-mandated requirements in the required subject areas.

A student in grades K-8 may be eligible for a waiver of retention criteria for acceptable good cause as outlined in this policy.

A student may be retained at the same grade level/course(s) when s/he has not demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the State-mandated requirements in the required subject areas. Parents must be informed in advance of the possibility of grade-level retention of a student.

Promotion

Student promotion shall reflect the overall performance of the student; the classroom teacher will make a recommendation for each student's promotion, based on factors that may include, but are not limited to:

- Previous retentions
- Observations
- Checklists
- Student portfolios
- Classroom and district approved assessments
- Current grades/marks
- Level of text at which student is successful

The primary responsibility for determining each student's proficiency and ability to function at the next academic level is that of the classroom teacher and/or a Promotion & Retention Committee. The final determination resides with the school principal.

Mandatory Retention/Remediation

Any student in kindergarten through grade 3 who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading based upon locally determined or statewide assessments or through teacher observations must be given intensive reading instruction immediately following the identification of the reading deficiency [Florida Statute §1008.25(5)(a)]. Immediate intensive intervention must be provided daily for all students who have been identified with a reading deficiency.

The student's reading proficiency must be reassessed by locally determined assessments or through teacher observations at the beginning of the grade following the intensive reading instruction. The student must continue to be provided with intensive reading instruction until the reading deficiency is remedied [Florida Statute §1008.25(5)(a)].

Progress monitoring three times per year must occur following the guidelines established in State Board Rule 6A-6.054, F.A.C.

If the student's reading deficiency is not remedied by the end of grade 3, as demonstrated by scoring Level 2 or higher on the Grade 3 FSA Reading, the student must be retained [Florida Statute §1008.25(5)(b)].

Students in grades 1-5 who are identified as being considerably or substantially below grade level (kindergarten through grade 2) or Level 1 or Level 2 (grades 3-5) in reading, writing, mathematics, and/or science must receive remediation and may be retained [Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(c)]. However, students whose test scores and classroom performance indicate that they are almost at grade level may be promoted with close monitoring or promoted with a progress monitoring plan.

The following options are available for students who have not met the levels of performance for student progression [Florida Statute §1008.25(2)(b)]:

- remediate before the beginning of the next school year and promote
- retain and remediate using an intensive program of instruction that is different from the previous school year and takes into account the student's learning style.

Each student who does not meet minimum performance expectations for the statewide assessments in reading, writing, science, and/or mathematics must continue remedial instruction or supplemental instruction until expectations are met or the student graduates from high school or is not subject to compulsory school attendance [Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(c)].

Progress Monitoring Plan

As required by Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(b), schools must develop, in consultation with the student's parent, a progress monitoring plan. A progress monitoring plan is intended to provide the school district and the school flexibility in meeting the academic needs of the student.

A student who is not meeting the school, district, or state requirements for proficiency in Reading and Math shall be covered by one of the following plans to target instruction and identify ways to improve his or her academic achievement:

1. A federally required student plan such as an individual education plan;
2. A school-wide system of progress monitoring for all students; or
3. An individualized progress monitoring plan.

The plan chosen must be designed to assist the student or the school in meeting state and district expectations for proficiency. If the student has been identified as having a deficiency in Reading, the K-12 comprehensive reading plan required by § 1011.62(8) shall include instructional and support services to be provided to meet the desired levels of performance.

Low-performing students may be required to attend remediation programs held before or after regular school hours or during the summer.

Each plan must outline an intensive remedial program in the area(s) of weakness designed to assist the student in meeting state and/or district expectations for proficiency.

Each student who does not meet the levels of performance as determined by the district/state must participate in additional diagnostic assessments to determine the nature of the student's difficulty and areas of academic need [Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(a)]. Diagnostic assessments may include:

- Student portfolio analysis
- text/math placement tests
- diagnostic software tools

Data from the additional assessments are to be used to formulate the progress monitoring plan.

The progress monitoring plan and remediation will occur as soon as possible after a student has been identified as deficient in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and/or Science.

If the student identification occurs during the last nine weeks of the school year, the progress monitoring plan will be made at the beginning of the following school year with remediation immediately following.

The progress monitoring plan for a student who has been identified as deficient in Reading must identify:

- The student's deficiencies in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
- the desired levels of performance in these areas;
- the instructional and support services to be provided to meet the desired levels of performance.

It is the responsibility of the teacher, the teacher of student supports, and the principal to ensure that the progress monitoring plan is substantive and that the outlined instructional and support services are provided. The school district will assist schools and teachers in the implementation of research-based Reading activities [Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(b)]. The progress monitoring plan should clearly identify:

- the specific diagnosed academic needs to be remedied;
- the success-based intervention strategies to be used;
- how, when, how often by whom, and how long intensive remedial instruction is to be provided; and
- the monitoring and reevaluation activities to be employed.

Retention

Students who score consistently at Level 1 and/or lower Level 2 (with no scores in Level 3 or above) on state/district assessments and whose classroom performance in reading, writing, mathematics, and/or science indicates that they are below grade level should be retained unless exempted from retention for good cause.

Students whose state/district assessment scores range from Level 1 to upper Level 2 (with no scores at Level 3 or above) should be considered for retention. Compelling verifiable evidence indicating the student is performing at or near grade level may be utilized to enact a decision to promote such students.

Students whose state/district assessment scores range between Level 1 to Level 3 or above should be considered for promotion with a progress monitoring plan. Such students may be promoted without a progress monitoring plan if compelling, verifiable evidence overwhelmingly indicates that the student is performing at or above Level 3. However, such students may be retained if compelling verifiable evidence shows that the student's classroom performance is equivalent to Level 1 or lower Level 2.

Third Grade Retention for Reading

Third-grade students retained for reading must be provided daily intensive interventions in reading to improve the student's specific reading deficiency, as identified by a valid and reliable diagnostic assessment. This intensive intervention must include effective instructional strategies, the opportunity to participate in the Monroe County School District's Third Grade Summer Reading Academy, and appropriate teaching

methodologies necessary to assist those students in becoming successful readers, able to read at or above grade level, and ready for promotion to the next grade [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(a)].

Progress monitoring plans for all students who did not score above Level 1 in the state assessment for Reading and who did not meet the criteria for one of the good cause exemptions must be reviewed to address additional supports and services needed to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency. In addition, a student portfolio must be completed for each such student [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)1].

Third-grade students retained for reading due to a reading deficiency as evidenced by not scoring Level 2 or above on the reading portion of the state assessment must be provided intensive instructional services and supports to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency, including a minimum of 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, scientifically research-based reading instruction and other strategies which may include, but are not limited to [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)2]:

1. small group instruction:
2. reduced teacher-student ratios:
3. more frequent progress monitoring:
4. tutoring or mentoring:
5. transition classes containing 3rd and 4th-grade students:
6. extended school day, week, or year; and/or
7. Summer Reading Academy.

Written notification **must** be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of any third-grade student retained for reading stating that his or her child has not met the proficiency level required for promotion **and** the reasons the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption. The notification **must** comply with the provisions of Florida Statute §1002.20 (15) (STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS) and must include a description of proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the student to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)3].

Third-grade students retained for reading must have a high-performing teacher as determined by student performance data and above-satisfactory performance appraisals [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)5].

Parents/guardians of third-grade students retained for reading **must** be provided with:

- reading enhancement and acceleration strategies
- at least one of the following instructional options:
 1. Supplemental tutoring in scientifically research-based reading services in addition to the regular reading block, including tutoring before and/or after school [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)6a];
 2. A "Read at Home" plan outlined in a parental contract, including participation in "Families Building Better Readers Workshops" and regular parent-guided home reading [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)6b]; or
 3. A mentor or tutor with specialized reading training [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)6c].

After School Program

Our after school program is created to replicate the responsibilities learned in the classroom environment. Students are given opportunities to work on social-emotional skills, create friendships and learn through play with one another.

Homework

Montessori students spend a large portion of their day in deep concentration on large work. At May Sands we encourage the practice of Practical Life skills at home that compliment the curriculum the student is engaged with at school. Traditional homework is generally not given to students due to our use of concrete materials that stay in the classroom space. If you would like suggestions on how to help your child at home, please reach out to your Guide.

Field Trips and Going Out

Montessori students learn best when they are able to connect with their community. Field trips and “going out” are an integral part of our curriculum. Lead Guides use what they are teaching in the classroom and are able to extend that learning. Depending on the plane of development of the child, a “going out” could consist of walking to the community garden, taking a quick trip to the beach to collect water samples or walking to the local public library to get a library card. Families will always be notified of a going out or field trip.

Library

Students are welcome to visit the school library with their class, or during times they choose and have permission to leave the classroom. They may check out books with the Front Office Assistant to borrow. Books should be returned within 2 weeks of check-out.

Enrichment

The Montessori curriculum inherently provides enrichment throughout the day, however there are also opportunities in the afternoons for additional enrichment activities. We consistently have Physical Education, Music, Art and Yoga/Meditation available for our students. Once a week we provide a “Wheel” of choices that students will choose their preferred activity for an hour. Some of these activities include (depending on the time of year and amount of interest): yoga, coding, photography, journalism, home economics, and drumming just to name a few. These options will change every 9 weeks for students to try something new.

Health and Safety

Illness

Children are expected to be in good health when attending school. Weather permitting; students go outside to play every day. If you feel your child is too sick to go out to play, he or she is probably too sick to be at school. If your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call or send an email to our office by 8:15 to let us know they will be absent.

Colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed. Students with infectious conditions, such as chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, or ringworm must stay home until the infectious stage has passed. Please inform the office of your child’s diagnosis as soon as possible.

Students with a fever (100.1 or greater), sore throat, eye infection, persistent cough, or severe nasal excretions should remain at home. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home as well. Students must be **fever free without medication for 24 hours before they can return**.

If your child becomes ill at school or exhibits any of the above symptoms, we will contact you to arrange for an early dismissal. We understand how difficult this can be for working parents, yet all of our children become ill from time to time. Please make arrangements in advance for a friend or relative to come when you cannot.

Conditions for school reentry following illness must be adhered to by students and staff of the school.

Bacterial Infection

A child or member of staff may return to school 24 hours after ingesting the first dose of a prescribed antibiotic.

Viral Infection

A child or member of staff may return to school after having been **fever free without medication for 24 hours**. Clarification: The last dose of Acetaminophen was given at 9am on Sunday morning. A temperature check 6 hours later indicates the individual is fever free. The 24 hour period begins at that moment. If the individual remains fever free during this time frame, he/she may return to school on Tuesday morning.

If a student or member of staff presents at school with a fever of 100.1 or greater, severe nasal discharge, persistent cough, red eye with drainage or discolored sputum, he/she must be dismissed from school and must remain at home for 24 hours. The individual may return to school after 24 hours if they are symptom free or sooner if accompanied by a doctor's note stating they are "clear" to return to school on "Date_____".

Open Wounds

A student or member of staff may not attend school if his/her wound is draining outside of the bandage, or the bandage will not stay in place. The focus is to prevent exposure of any potentially infectious or contagious fluid to any other individual; all open wounds must be securely covered at all times, with no visible drainage or strike through the bandage. If there is suspicion of a contagious infection or disease process, the child/member of staff will be sent home and prohibited from returning to school for 48 hours. The individual may return to school after 24 hours if they are symptom free or sooner if accompanied by a doctor's note stating they are "clear" to return to school on "Date_____".

Emergency Care

In the event of a medical situation that requires immediate attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. **Please remember to keep your emergency contact information up to date.** We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

Medications

Only under extraordinary conditions do we administer medication at school. Please do not send in any medication with your child, including: topical creams, cough medicine, sunscreen, or other over the counter drugs, except under a doctor's instructions. Our instructional and administrative teams are prohibited from providing or administering any over the counter medication except as authorized in writing by your child's physician.

When in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary to administer medication during school hours, please adhere to the following procedure:

- Complete an Authorization to Administer Medication form for each medication to be administered. This form is available on our school's website and in the office.
- A parent/guardian must present any prescription medication in its original bottle - clearly labeled with the student's name, medication contained, time and amount of dosage - to the school office or Health Care Coordinator. If refills, new bottles or containers are necessary, this process must be redone. Expired medication cannot be administered.
- As parent or guardian, you are responsible for administering the first dosage of any new medication at home.
- Collect all unused/discontinued medication within five (5) school days from our school office.

Emergency Drills

A variety of drills to practice safe and orderly procedures in the event of an emergency are held each year. In all of these, the primary concern of any drill is the safety of the students. All adults in the building are to protect students from harm and to be responsible for the children in their care.

Fire Drill

The purpose of a fire drill is to practice the evacuation of the school building by all personnel in as quick, quiet, and safe manner as possible. The signal for the drill is the sounding of the actual fire alarm. Each Guide prepares for these drills by reviewing the nearest exit to their room with each class at the beginning of the school year, and discussing the rules for student behavior during a fire drill.

Severe Weather Drill

In the event that there is a severe weather warning from the Weather Bureau, all schools are notified by an emergency alert radio. If it is necessary, all classes will report quickly to the nearest classroom away from windows and doors. Students follow the procedures for all other drills, moving quickly, quietly, and safely to the designated space. The announcement for this evacuation is via an announcement over the radio.

Lockdown Drill

In the event of a threat to student safety by an intruder, it may be necessary for Guides to protect their students from any interaction. An announcement will be made over the intercom that the school is in a Lockdown situation. Students will remain in a lockdown drill until the all-clear announcement is made.

Lockdown drills will be announced to students as well as parents so everyone is well informed and there are no concerns for families at the end of the day.

Appendix

Dr. Maria Montessori introduced many new terms and concepts to describe how children grow and learn. These terms are still widely in use today in the Montessori community. You may encounter these terms as you learn about the Montessori method of education.

Absorbent mind – From birth through approximately age 6, the young child experiences a period of intense mental activity that allows her to “absorb” learning from her environment quickly and easily without conscious effort.

Casa dei Bambini – In Italian, “Children’s House,” and the name of Dr. Montessori’s first school.

Children’s House – In many Montessori schools, this is the name of the classroom for children ages 2.5 (or 3) to 6 years; other schools call the classroom for this age group Casa, preschool, primary, or early childhood.

Concrete to abstract – A logical, developmentally appropriate progression that allows the child to develop an abstract understanding of a concept by first encountering it in a concrete form, such as learning the mathematical concept of the decimal system by working with Golden Beads grouped into units, 10s, 100s, and 1,000s.

Control of error – Montessori materials are designed so that the child receives instant feedback about her progress as she works, allowing her to recognize, correct, and learn from an error without adult assistance. Putting control of the activity in the child’s hands strengthens her self-esteem and self-motivation as well as her learning.

Coordination of movement – Refining large- and fine-motor movements is one of the accomplishments of early childhood development, as the child learns to complete tasks independently. The Montessori classroom offers opportunities for children to refine their movements and children are drawn to these activities, especially to those which require exactitude and precision.

Cosmic education – Maria Montessori urged us to give children a “vision of the universe” to help them discover how all of its parts are interconnected and interdependent, and to help them understand their place in society and the world. In Montessori schools, children in Elementary programs (between the ages of 6 – 12) learn about the creation of the universe through stories that integrate the studies of astronomy, chemistry, biology, geography, and history. These lessons help children become aware of their own roles and responsibilities as humans and as members of society, and help them explore their “cosmic task”—their unique, meaningful purpose in the world.

Didactic materials – Didactic meaning “designed or intended to teach,” these are the specially-designed instructional materials—many invented by Maria Montessori—that are a hallmark of all Montessori classrooms.

Directress or guide – Historically, the designation for the lead teacher in a Montessori classroom; some schools still refer to the lead teacher as “directress” or “guide,” while others use the more recognizable term, “teacher.” In Montessori education, the role of the teacher is to guide individual children to purposeful activity based upon her observations of each child’s readiness and interests.

Erdkinder – German for “child of the earth,” this term describes a Montessori learning environment for adolescents ages 12 – 15 that connects them with nature and engages them in purposeful, hands-on work in which they contribute to the community. Erdkinder programs are often referred to as “farm schools.”

Freedom within limits – Montessori classrooms are carefully and thoughtfully designed to encourage children to move about freely and choose their own work, within reasonable limits of appropriate behavior. Those limits are the classroom ground rules, and enable children to exercise their own free will while ensuring that their chosen activities are respectful of others and their environment.

Grace and courtesy – In Montessori schools, children are formally instructed in social skills they will use throughout their lives, for example, saying “please” and “thank you,” interrupting conversations politely, requesting rather than demanding assistance, and greeting guests warmly.

Ground rules – Classroom rules in the Montessori classroom are typically referred to as “ground rules” which dictate appropriate behavior in the classroom. At all age-levels, the ground rules are simple—children are free to work with any material or activity displayed in the environment as long as they use it respectfully. They may not harm the material, themselves, or others.

Mixed-age grouping (or multi-age grouping) – One of the hallmarks of Montessori education is that children of mixed ages work together in the same class. Age groupings are based on the Planes of Development as identified by Dr. Maria Montessori. Multi-age groupings enable younger children to learn from older children and experience new challenges through observation; older children reinforce their learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered, develop leadership skills, and serve as role models. Because each child’s work is individual, children progress at their own pace; there is cooperation rather than competition between the ages. This arrangement mirrors the real world, in which individuals work and socialize with people of all ages and dispositions. Typically, children from 2.5/3 – 6 years of age are grouped together in an Early Childhood classroom. 6 – 9 year olds share the Lower Elementary (grades 1 – 3) and the Upper Elementary is made up of 9 – 12 year olds (grades 4 – 6). At the Secondary level, groupings may be 2- or 3-years. Children from birth – age 3 may be grouped in varying multi-age

configurations, and are commonly grouped from birth to 15/18 months (or when mobile) and 15/18 months to age 3.

Montessori – The term may refer to Dr. Maria Montessori, founder of the Montessori Method of education, or the method itself.

Nido – “Nest” in Italian, this is a Montessori environment for infants, though not all schools that offer an infant program use this term.

Normalization – A natural developmental process exhibited by a love of work or activity, concentration, self-discipline, and joy in accomplishment. Dr. Montessori observed that children in Montessori programs exhibit normalization through repeated periods of uninterrupted work during which time they work freely and at their own pace on their own chosen activities. A normalized child is a happy, well-adjusted child who exhibits positive social skills in the Montessori classroom.

Planes of development – Four distinct periods of growth, development, and learning identifies by Dr. Maria Montessori that a human being progresses through: ages 0 – 6 (the period of the “absorbent mind”); 6 – 12 (the period of reasoning and abstraction); 12 – 18 (when adolescents construct the “social self,” developing moral values and becoming emotionally independent); and 18 – 24 years (when young adults construct an understanding of the self and seek to know their place in the world).

Practical life – The Montessori term that encompasses “domestic” work to maintain the home and classroom environment; self-care and personal hygiene; and grace and courtesy. Practical life skills are of great interest to young children and form the basis of later abstract learning.

Practical life activities – Young children in Montessori classrooms learn to take care of themselves and their environment through activities such as hand washing, dusting, and mopping. These activities help toddlers and preschool-age children learn to work independently, develop concentration, and prepare for later work with reading and math; older children participate in more advanced activities such as cooking, gardening, operating a business.

Prepared environment – The teacher prepares the environment of the Montessori classroom with carefully selected, aesthetically arranged materials that are presented sequentially to meet the developmental needs of the children using the space. Well-prepared Montessori environments contain appropriately sized furniture, a full complement of Montessori materials, and enough space to allow children to work in peace, alone, or in small or large groups.

Primary classroom – In some Montessori schools, this is a classroom for children ages 3 – 6 years; however, the American Montessori Society uses the term ‘Early Childhood’ and defines the age range as 2.5 – 6 years.

Sensitive period – A critical time during human development when the child is biologically ready and receptive to acquiring a specific skill or ability—such as the use of language or a sense of order—and is therefore particularly sensitive to stimuli that promote the development of that skill. A Montessori teacher prepares the environment to meet the developmental needs of each sensitive period.

Sensorial materials – Work with these materials develops and refines the 5 senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling—and builds a foundation for speech, writing, and math. Each scientifically designed material isolates a specific quality such as color, size, or shape. This focuses the child’s attention on this one characteristic, and teaches her to sort, classify, order, and develop vocabulary to describe objects she experiences in the world around her.

The 3-period lesson – A 3-step technique for presenting information to the child. In the first—the *introduction* or *naming* period—the teacher demonstrates what “this is.” (The teacher might say “This is a mountain” while pointing to it on a 3-dimensional map.) In the second—the *association* or *recognition* period—the teacher asks the child to “show” what was just identified (“Show me the mountain”). Finally, in the *recall* period, the teacher asks the child to name the object (“What is this?” she asks the child, while pointing to the mountain.) Moving from taking in new information, to passive recall, to active identification reinforces the child’s learning and demonstrates her mastery of the concept.

Work – Purposeful activity. Maria Montessori observed that children learn through purposeful activities of their own choosing. Montessori schools call all of the children’s activities “work.” While “work” sounds like a serious endeavor, Dr. Montessori observed that children exhibit joy and experience this purposeful activity as play.

Work cycle – Within the prepared environment of the Montessori classroom, children are taught to complete a work cycle which includes 1) choosing an activity; 2) completing the activity to completion (perhaps repeating the full sequence of the activity multiple times), cleaning up and returning the materials to the proper place; and 3) experiencing a sense of satisfaction to have fully completed the task.