Parent Handbook

Woodland Montessori School admits students of any race, religion, and national or ethnic origin. We believe diversity of backgrounds adds to the richness of the program. Woodland Montessori School has no religious affiliation.

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Introduction

Woodland Montessori School was established in 1981 to present the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) philosophy to children ages 2.5 to 6 years. Maria Montessori founded the Association Montessori Internationale as the governing body to assure quality Montessori education worldwide.

Our hours are from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. We follow a school year calendar similar to Spokane Public Schools. We provide a Montessori atmosphere all day. Children are free to choose Montessori work throughout the day.

At Woodland, the development of a community within each classroom is very important. For this reason, all children attend class five days a week from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. At the age of five (usually a child's third year), children are encouraged to attend all day (from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm). During afternoons, these older children are able to do more complex, advanced activities.

Woodland's program is a 3 to 4 year commitment. We count on having children grow within the classroom community with opportunities to feel the roles of "youngest," "middle-aged," and finally, "old and wise!" We do not wish to accept children for enrollment who do not intend to remain for the entire cycle through their kindergarten year.

AMI Philosophy

In order to allow children to develop emotionally, physically, and intellectually at their own pace, Woodland's Montessori classrooms are engineered to provide freedom of movement and a wide selection of activities. Within a framework of respect for the rights of others, the child learns to take responsibility for his/her own actions and learning.

The Guide's job is to observe the child, to prepare the environment to meet each child's needs, to guide the child in the use of the learning materials, and to be a positive role model in facilitating interpersonal relationships.

Ultimately, the goal of a Montessori education is to foster the development of a fully integrated personality in each child. Education is not considered a separate event in life, but a preparation for life itself.

Curriculum

Practical Life:

These are familiar activities, common to home life, which the child learns to perform as complete tasks, from beginning to end. Practical Life skills include: pouring liquids, polishing mirrors and metals, scrubbing tables and chairs, washing cloths and dishes, carrying objects, mopping spills, preparing food, water plants, and fastening clothes.

Sensorial:

In these activities, various sensory elements are isolated and identified, including shape, size, color, smell, texture, and weight. Examples of Sensorial materials are: bells, cylinder blocks, sound cylinders, touch tablets, smelling bottles, color tablets, sorting cloths, the pink tower, the geometry cabinet, etc.

Mathematics:

A guiding precept in developing understanding of mathematics is Maria Montessori's caution: "Never give the mind more than the hand can handle." Math concepts are conveyed through the use of spatial materials, such as the number rods and golden bead materials, which show quantities from one unit up to 9,999.

With these activities, children gain concrete understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. This early manipulative practice prepares the child for later abstractions.

Language:

Speaking, writing, and reading are strongly emphasized within the classroom. The Guide takes care to speak clearly, often slowly, to encourage understanding and attention. The sounds of the alphabet and the look of letters are often fascinating to the youngest children. This intrinsic interest is encouraged with materials such as a moveable alphabet and sandpaper letters. Children first learn to write their own words using phonetic keys, and then their own sentences and stories. It then follows naturally that they discover the same rules apply to other's work. Most five year olds eventually begin to read other's stories as well as their own.

Culture and More:

Art, music, botany, zoology, history, and geography are also introduced, not as separate subjects but as integral parts of the child's exploration of the world and language.

Personnel

Classroom Guides:

All classroom Guides have a diploma from the Association of Montessori Internationale. They must demonstrate the ability to manage a group of at least twenty children ranging in age from 2.5 to 6 years old. The Guide must keep records for each child of the lessons and activities presented in the following areas:

- Language Arts
- Practical Life
- Sensorial
- Mathematics
- Cultural Subjects

Classroom Assistants:

The Assistant in each classroom must have an understanding of the philosophy being applied and a good working relationship with the classroom Guide. The assistant will help with minor classroom activities, offering assistance to children as needed. The assistant will play group games, read stories, sing songs, and play language games.

Daily Routine

7:30 am to 9:00 am

Children arriving before school will be allowed a choice of quiet activities: reading books, listening to stories or music, art projects, block building, and any materials with which they are already familiar. A simple breakfast is also offered at that time.

Additionally, some children like to assist in preparing the classroom. They will be invited to participate in wetting sponges, carrying small buckets of water, arranging tables and chairs, putting away laundry or dishes. It is important at that time of the day to offer activities that will lead to a smooth transition into the "school" routine.

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

All children will be in their own classrooms. Children are encouraged to come in and select their own individual work to begin the morning. Older children often continue work that they began the previous afternoon. During this time, the Guide offers individual and small-group lessons to children based on their ages and interests.

Between 10 am and noon, some children continue to be very independent and others need more adult attention. The Guide and Assistant offer some small and large group activities. Small groups center around games that build language skills, use of materials that build memory, and games that invite movement, exercise, and concentration. Larger groups will sing songs and listen to stories. All children are invited to these interactions, but are not required to come. Sometime during the morning, the entire class will go outside with both Guide and Assistant.

Noon

Noon is a transition time. At 12:00pm, many children will go home. Children remaining for lunch help to create an attractive table for eating by using tablecloths or place mats, plates, and glasses. Meals are "family style," with Guides and Assistants modeling grace and courtesy.

1 pm to 3:00 pm

After children finish eating, they will clean their lunch area and begin afternoon activities. The afternoon program is a special time when the older children receive more concentrated, longer projects involving more advanced language and math, as well as special art, science, and geography lessons. They children staying for the afternoon will have a quiet resting time after their lunch, listening to music or stories.

Children who nap will receive help organizing their cot with their own blanket, pillow, and sheet. They will listen to quiet music with a soothing adult while they fall asleep. Young children who do not nap often watch the older children or practice their own handwriting, art expression, or look at books.

3:00 pm to 5:30 pm

Children who remain after pickup will have supervised playtime outside and continued inside work similar to the early morning activities. Between 3:30 pm and 4 pm, an afternoon snack will be provided. At 5:15 pm, the children will begin "tidying up." They can assist in putting away materials, straightening tables and chairs, and arranging the room for the morning.

All children must be picked up by 5:30 pm. Parents will be charged a late fee of a dollar per minute for pick up times after 5:30pm.

Sharing

Talking about experiences is encouraged. It is helpful if you discuss with your child what experiences they might share with the class. Objects may be shared. Help your child select objects that may benefit others in the class, such as something the child has made, natural specimens, items from other cultures, pictures from trips, newspaper articles, etc. Please do not allow your child to bring toys, games, cosmetics, or money to school.

Clothing

All children should have a complete change of clothing in their cubby at all times. Please check as the seasons change to be sure it is appropriate clothing and still fits.

Children should dress comfortably and with attire appropriate to the weather. Please have them wear outer clothing that will enable them to go out doors on any day. We will continue going outdoors throughout the year unless the weather is particularly cold or severe. Children should have a spare pair of shoes at school they wear in the classroom. While the Guide and Assistant can support the child with their clothing, please keep in mind clothing that fosters independence in using the bathroom and changing clothes when necessary. Footwear that invites independence is advised, as well as encouraging your child to change their footwear autonomously upon drop-off and pick-up.

Snacks

Our snacked is planned each week and we create a grocery list of food items needed. State guidelines require us to offer nourishing foods containing vitamin C daily and vitamin A at least three times a week. Within these parameters, we try to offer some seasonal snacks that the children can help prepare. All of the classrooms have various food preparations as activities such as carrot peeling and cutting, wheat grinding and pizza dough making, banana slicing, and muffin/bread making.

Each classroom has a routine for how parents sign up to contribute groceries throughout the year. We realize some items are more expensive than others and consider this when creating the grocery lists.

Lunch

Children at school for lunch will bring their own lunch. We eat as a family. This is a pleasant, relaxed, social time. We set the table with tablecloths or place mats, dishes, silverware, glasses, and napkins. Pitchers of water and milk are provided. The children put their lunch onto plates to make it more attractive and pour their milk or water into their glasses. In keeping with the Montessori philosophy, we ask that you send foods they can manage on their own.

Also, we ask that you keep desserts out of lunch boxes; we've found that this rule keeps lunches more pleasant and children are free to eat as much of their food in any order they choose. Little messages and notes included with their lunches are loved and sweeten the meal.

Arrivals and Departures

Please bring and pick up your children on time. If you must bring them early, please make arrangements for them to join the children who are in early morning childcare. Likewise, it is difficult for children to be left waiting when they expect to be picked up. Please make arrangements for them to participate in afternoon childcare if you cannot pick them up on time. When you arrive at school, please walk the children into the building and see that they enter their respective classrooms.

State law requires that an adult sign in and sign out all children you are transporting to school with a full, legal signature. Be sure the school has on file all adults authorized to pick up your child. Please do not have children write on the sign in and sign out sheet.

In our busy world our phones often ring at inconvenient times. If you are on your phone as you arrive at school, please finish the conversation and hang up before picking up your child. They expect your undivided attention when they first see you.

The hallway at school is a "transition zone" where they are not sure if the Guide is in charge or the parent. If the Guide is busy in the classroom, children should not be in the hallway unless an adult is ready to interact with them. Give them some time and attention, and then when you are back in your car you can explain that you need to make a phone call.

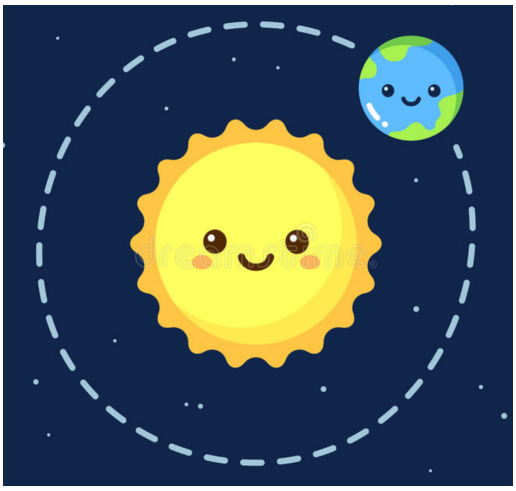
Parking Lot Safety

Children need to stay with their parents near their car until the adult is ready to walk into the school. Although we love to foster independence, a parking area is a time for children to be closely supervised. Explain to your children that this is not a place or time for running because sometimes an adult is going too fast and doesn't see someone small when they are backing up! When you are picking your children up, please don't send them out the door until you are ready to go with them.

Birthdays

We celebrate each child's birthday as close as possible to his/her actual birthday. We ask parents to share a story about the child's life and pictures of the child. If it is convenient for the parents, they are welcome to participate in this celebration. Please talk to your child's Guide to schedule his/her celebration.

Our celebration involves the birthday child carrying a globe and walking around a "sun" (a candle) as many revolutions as their age. We invite parents to come and tell a short story about the birthday child. "When he was a baby . . ." "When she turned one . . ." Some parents bring 3-4 pictures to show of different ages of their child's life.



To avoid hurt feelings of children not invited, please don't bring invitations to school. Use the parent directory and either mail or email party invitations.

Transportation

Woodland Montessori School does not provide transportation. We provide you with a directory so you may arrange your own car pools. We need to have a record of your car pool arrangements on the Transportation Form in your child's file. Please keep us up-to-date on any changes.

If your child is to leave with someone other than his/her regularly scheduled ride or someone from their authorized pick-up list, you must notify us. We cannot release your child to anyone without your permission to do so.

Field Trips

Woodland does not offer any field trips. Preschool children are often just getting used to separating from family, therefore outing away from school are best done with family rather than with a large school group.

Religion

Woodland Montessori School has no religious affiliation and offers no religious instruction. Discussions of various religions may occur during cultural and geographical studies.

Waitlist

Priority for enrollment goes first to siblings of currently enrolled students, then to returning families including alumni, and then to new students. When the director offers a waitlisted family a new opening, the family has 48 hours to either accept or decline the spot. After that time has passed, the next family on the waitlist will be offered the available spot based on the priority criteria detailed above.

Discipline

Woodland's discipline is based on the assumption that a child who has displayed lack of self-control needs an adult with very good self-control. Our first step is to tell the child "no" and to tell them to stop the behavior. For a child who needs more than the first phase, the second step is to take back the freedom of choice. In a Montessori classroom, all children are free to move around, pick where they sit, and select which activities they want. Withdrawing this privilege sends a clear message.

In some cases, a child may need to sit with a Guide while the Guide assists other children. This third phase is different from the traditional "time-out." Rather than being isolated, the child can borrow the tranquility and self-discipline of the adult. Although the misbehaving child is not being lavished with personal attention and is restricted from taking any activities, there is an opportunity to observe appropriate behavior while calming down.

Small group discussions and role-playing of appropriate ways to behave in various situations are part of Woodland's classroom curriculum. Children are taught and guided to practice ways to discuss hurt feelings and positive self-assertions. A child needing more than these small-group lessons will also have a private discussion with the Guide about his/her particular behavior.

Any child who seems to need repeated individual conferences also needs to have his or her parents informed of the problem arising at school. Woodland has a No Expulsion policy. We want to help all children become a part of a community. A parent conference will be arranged with the Guide (and without the child) to discuss further arrangements. At no time is physical punishment ever used.

Health

We strive to maintain a healthy, safe environment for all children. Please do not send a sick child to school. Your child should not return until symptoms of fever, diarrhea, or vomiting have subsided for 24 hours. Please report any communicable disease to the school. Individuals with head lice, ring work, or scabies cannot be at school starting from the end of the day the condition was discovered. They may return to school when they are no longer contagious after starting treatment. Please inform us of any allergies or medical conditions we should be aware of for your child.

If you child seems to be feeling ill during the school day, we will use your emergency information to locate parents or designated contacts. A child who becomes ill will be given a cot to rest on until a parent can make further arrangements.

If a significant accident or illness occurs at school, we will take necessary steps to secure care for your child. We require a current emergency release form on file at all times that your child is in our care. (A copy of our complete health care policy is in the office.)

Medication

If your child needs to take medication while in school, Washington state law requires that we have written directions from you or your physician on our forms. The medication must be in its original container. Non-prescription medication cannot be administered in a dosage not indicated on the label without a physician's signed instructions. An individual health plan should be on file for children with asthma and severe allergies. Please refer to the "Heath Care Plan" available in the school office.

Bad Weather

When District 81 schools are closed due to bad weather, we will also close. Listen to the radio or television for a list of closures. We will send out a school-wide email to confirm closure. When the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaches a level of 100 or higher, we will refrain from playing outside.

Disaster Plan

A more thorough description of our Disaster Plan is available in the office with the school's Heath Care Policies.

All classrooms are equipped with emergency lighting in case of power failure. There will be a three-day supply of food and water on hand for the staff and children in case they are unable to leave. During any evacuation, each lead Guide will carry current emergency information relevant to each child to inform parents or other designated adults of the emergency. The Guide will also carry the daily sign-in sheets in order to track each child in their care. The director will have a cell phone available to call families. Flashlights and batteries are in the supply room.

If the building has been evacuated, each classroom meets first in their designated area:

South Classroom: south ADA pad
North Classroom: playground
Lower Classroom: side yard

*Any child unable to walk will be carried by the classroom Guide.

If continued evacuation is necessary, the entire enrollment will move to the enclosed playground area on the south side of the building. If the conditions are such (due to weather or other emergencies) that remaining outdoors is not possible, the staff and students will move to Edgecliff Park (6th and Park) picnic shelter.

Each Assistant will begin calling families while Guides work to reassure students. Messages will be left at families' home and work numbers. The Director will leave a message on the school's answering system so that parents calling the school will hear what is happening and where to pick up their child. The Director will also call the SCOPE office to alert them to the situation and to elicit help.

Each family has designated on an emergency form other people to contact if they cannot be reached. In an emergency, each Guide will remain on the premises with children unable to be picked up until such time as the adult-child ration allows them to depart. The Director will be in charge during these emergencies and will remain on the premises until an authorized adult picks up the last child. Each Guide will maintain responsibility for their own assigned children, especially those with special needs. No Guide will depart before making sure that the Guide remaining understands fully the needs of each child remaining (such as monitoring of diabetes, food allergies, cerebral palsy, etc.).

If the emergency allows continued use of our own building, all remaining children and staff will remain in the Lower classroom, since that is currently used for daycare purposes. Staff will offer snacks and drinks as needed.

The most likely emergencies in our area would be: fire, loss of power, ice storms, or neighborhood violence requiring a lockdown.

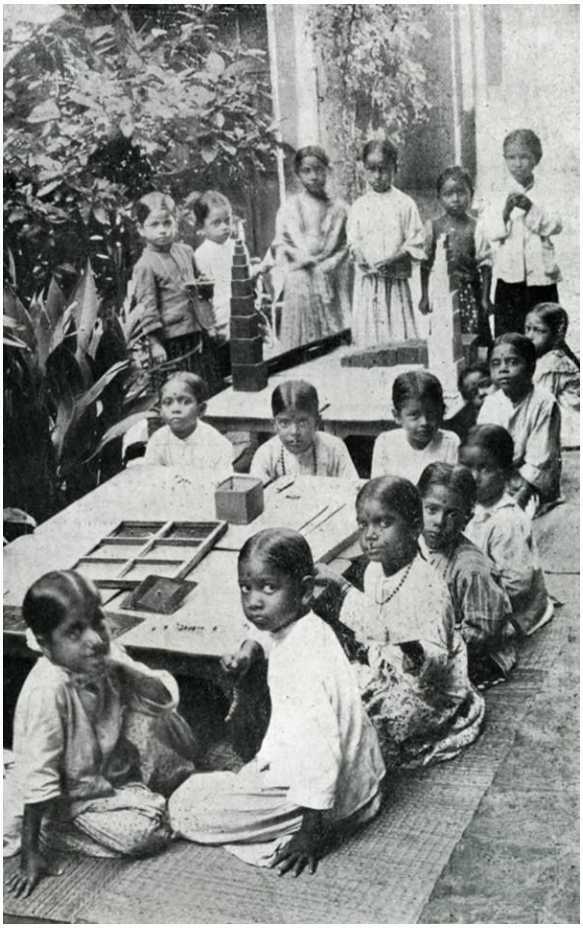
A fire drill will happen monthly. Once a year, each classroom will discuss and practice earthquake safety. Staff will help children practice hiding under strong tables, crouching, and covering heads. Also once a year, staff will practice a lock-down. During a lock-down, all doors to the building will be locked. Parents arriving will only be allowed entrance at the South door (main entrance) and the Director will monitor the door. Only adults known in the school community (parents, carpools) will be allowed entrance.

Conferences

Parent-Guide conferences will be scheduled twice per year, one in the fall and a second in the spring. If you or your child's Guide feels additional conferences are necessary, they will be scheduled between the parent and Guide.

Parent Education

At least four parent evenings will be scheduled each school year to inform parents of school philosophy and basic child development. Books on Montessori philosophy and parenting guidance are available to borrow from our office library.



Observation

You are invited and encouraged to observe your child's class. We ask that you sit and watch the children without participating in any way. In this way, you will see what their environment is like. You are also welcome to tour the entire building. Please schedule this with your child's Guide.

Volunteering

We do not have volunteers in the classroom, but volunteers are always welcome in other ways! We often need help with making and repairing materials, paper cutting, sewing, minor carpentry, painting, and yard maintenance. Occasionally parents are used as substitutes or in the school office. Please let us know if you would like to help!