



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

LAKE GENEVA MONTESSORI SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK



“THE GOAL OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
SHOULD BE TO ACTIVATE
THE CHILDS OWN NATURAL
DESIRE TO LEARN”.

— MARIA MONTESSORI

Revised 7/2025

Welcome	Page 3
Mission Statement	Page 4
Philosophy	Page 4
Hours of Operation	Page 4
School Year	Page 4
Admission Policy	Page 4
Annual Registration	Page 4
Tuition	Page 4
Enrollment Forms	Page 5
Orientation	Page 5
First Day of School	Page 5
Attendance and Dismissal	Page 5
Absence Policy	Page 5
Preschool Program	Page 6
Sample Daily Schedule	Page 7
Parent Communication	Page 8
Health and Safety	Page 8
Nutrition	Page 9
Pets	Page 9
General Policies	Page 10
Emergency Closing	Page 10
Discipline and Guidance	Page 10
Transportation	Page 10
Holidays and Celebrations	Page 10
Thank You	Page 10
An Overview of the Montessori Method	Page 11-13
Commonly Asked Questions	Page 14-16

Welcome to Lake Geneva Montessori School!

Dear Montessori School Parent/Guardian,

On behalf of the Geneva Lakes Family YMCA, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome both you and your child to the Lake Geneva Montessori School offered at the Lake Geneva United Methodist Church. We are thrilled to be a part of the Montessori community and are honored that you have entrusted your family to us. We are here to provide high quality care and extensive learning opportunities for your child. Our school offers curriculum provided through the Montessori philosophy, ensuring an environment that encourages learning through experience, exploration and at each child's own pace. We are excited about this upcoming year and pleased that your child will be sharing this adventure with us!

This Parent Handbook is designed to acquaint you with our program's policies and procedures. We strive to deliver our curriculum with a child-centered approach that focuses on where each individual child is developmentally, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically. We do not discriminate by race, sex, color, national origin, creed, or special needs. If you have any questions after reading through your parent handbook, please direct them to Nicole Zinkowich, Montessori School Director at 262-248-6211 extension 70. We look forward to meeting you soon and being a part of your early childhood learning experience!

Yours Truly,

The Lake Geneva Montessori School Team

912 Geneva Street
Lake Geneva, WI 53147
262-248-6211 ext. 70
GenevaLakesYMCA.ORG

Nicole Zinkowich, Montessori School Director
nicole.zinkowich@glymca.org

**"THE GREAT GIFTS WE CAN GIVE OUR CHILDREN ARE THE ROOTS OF RESPONSIBILITY
AND THE WINGS OF INDEPENDENCE." – MARIA MONTESSORI**

YMCA Mission

The YMCA's mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Our programs are open to all children regardless of their race, creed, religion, sex or national origin.

Philosophy

The philosophy of education practiced at Lake Geneva Montessori School is based on the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Respect for the child and their natural instinct toward intellectual growth and independence is the hallmark of this approach to education. We help children develop the habits, attitudes and skills that lead to a lifetime of active thinking.

Hours of Operation

Lake Geneva Montessori School is open from 7:15 – 4:15 PM

- 2 Year Old Program
 - Class Only: 8:45-11:30AM
 - Class w/Lunch: 8:45-12:30PM
 - Class w/Half Day Care*: 8:45-4:15PM
 - Class w/ Full Day Care*: 7:15-4:15 PM
- 3-5 Year Old Program
 - Class Only: 8:45-11:45AM
 - Class w/ Lunch: 8:45-12:45PM
 - Class w/Half Day Care*: 8:45-4:15PM
 - Class w/Full Day Care*: 7:15-4:15 PM

*Before and After School is only offered to students enrolled in one of our Montessori programs and is only available on days when school is in session.

School Year

The school is in session from September 2, 2025, through June 5, 2026, and coincides with the Lake Geneva Jt 1 School District 2025- 2026 school year calendar.

Admission Policy

Lake Geneva Montessori School, founded in 1988 and currently operated by the Geneva Lakes Family YMCA, offers exceptional early education for children aged 2 to 5 years. To enroll, children must be 2 years old by September 2, 2025, for the 2-Year-Old Class. For the Primary Classroom, children must be 3, 4, or 5 years old by September 2, 2025, and must be independently toilet trained.

Annual Registration

New student registration begins on April 1. There is a priority registration period for returning parents and their youngest siblings (March 1-April 1).

To secure a place in one of our programs you will need to Register online: Genevalakesymca/Montessori.org.

Tuition

Payment Options:

- Annual Payments: Due on August 19 to qualify for the 5% discount.
- Semi-Annual: Available by request.
- Monthly: Nine auto payments on the 1st of September, October, November, December of 2025 and January, February, March, April and May of 2026
- Payment will be drafted on the Monday prior to the week of care.
- Returned charges will result in a \$25 fee.
- No refunds will be given.

Fees and Discounts:

- \$50 Registration Fee: New students only, due with online registration, non refundable
- \$200 Security Deposit: For all students, due with online registration, refundable until July 1, 2025
- 10% sibling discount off oldest child's tuition
- Children enrolled in Montessori program are given a complimentary YMCA Youth Membership effective on September 1st - June 15th. There are options to upgrade to family memberships.

Enrollment Forms

The Wisconsin Department of Social Services' licensing regulations stipulate that all children entering Lake Geneva Montessori School must have the following forms completed and signed before attendance:

- State of Wisconsin Child Care Enrollment Form
- Day Care Immunization Record
- Child Health Report
- Nature Walk/Photo Release
- Child Information Card

These forms are available on Genevalakesymca/Montessori.org. It is the responsibility of the parents to update all required forms as change occur. All children's records are confidential.

Orientation

- Students in the 2 Year old's class and their parents/guardians will meet individually with the teachers in August. The lead teacher will contact you in July to schedule an appointment.
- Students in the 3-5 year old's classes should attend the Orientation Open House that is held in August.
- At Orientation students can see their classrooms and meet their teachers before the first day of school.

First Day of School

If this is your child's first school experience they are likely to feel a little bit uneasy or anxious. To make the first days/weeks as positive as they can be, our teachers have the following advice:

- If your child is very nervous or fearful about the start of school, try not to talk too much about it too far in advance.

- Try to maintain a cheerful, positive attitude yourself while getting ready for school and at drop off. Most children do best with a quick goodbye at the door, especially at the beginning of the school year.
- If you are concerned about your child's adjustment please speak with their teachers about your worries.
- If you are uncomfortable leaving you are welcome to remain on the school premises.

Attendance and Dismissal

- Attendance will be taken each day and logged within 15 minutes of the start of class.
- Please call (262) 248-6211 ext. 70 if you will be more than 15 minutes late for a scheduled class or if they will be absent.
- Regular counting of children and checks of bathrooms and other classrooms will occur.
- Parents are expected to pick up their child no later than 10 minutes after the end of class.
- Children will be released only to the people designated on the car pool/transportation form. Any changes must be in writing and must include the driver's license number of the person being authorized to pick up the child. The person should be prepared to show his/her license to a staff member.

Absence Policy

Please notify us if your child will not be attending on a normally scheduled date by calling 262-248-6211 ext. 70 or emailing your teacher.

- Please be sure to state your full name, your child's full name, and reason they will be absent on the message.
- If we have not heard from you, we will contact all the parents of absent students to know their whereabouts by 9:00 AM.
- Credits/refunds will not be given for an absence.

Preschool Program

Practical Life:

Activities in this area focus on large and small motor coordination. Activities include pouring, spooning, grasping, twisting, scrubbing, dressing frames, snack preparation, doll washing, care of the environment, and more. Activities are changed throughout the year to reflect the children's interest and development.

Language:

In this area there are reading prep activities such as matching, pattern recognition, and sequencing as well as phonics and word-building activities. There are also specially designed Montessori materials to help prepare the hand for holding a pencil and writing.

Cultural:

Starting with the globe and the continent puzzle map the children can focus on different continents and countries and the people and animals who live there. Other items relating to different cultures around the world can be found in this area.

Science:

Simple science experiments such as sink/float and magnetic/nonmagnetic are found in this area. 3- part matching cards identifying different parts of animals, plants etc. are available along with plastic models and books. Science activities are changed throughout the year.

Math:

Children start by exploring with materials like the Number Rods, Spindle Boxes, and Sandpaper Numbers to understand the sequence of numbers and their values. Concepts learned include the decimal system, traditional names (one, ten, hundred, thousand), arithmetic tablets, and fractions.

Sensorial:

The Sensorial Curriculum is a fundamental aspect of the Montessori method. These materials serve to train and refine a child's senses. Characteristics of Montessori Sensorial Materials include Isolated Properties, Control of Error, Aesthetically Pleasing, Universal Properties, Simple to Complex, and Concrete Representations.

Art:

The art area features a variety of free choice activities such as drawing, painting, rubbing, clay, scissors, and painting. The children are presented with different styles of art and art media throughout the year through books and special art projects.

Group Time:

Each day ends with large group time. We do large and small motor activities, sing songs, play games, practice conversation skills such as listening, sharing, and taking turns, and do our daily calendar. Once a week, a music teacher comes in for a half-hour lesson.



"IMAGINATION DOES NOT BECOME GREAT UNTIL HUMAN BEINGS, GIVEN THE COURAGE AND STRENGTH, USE IT TO CREATE." – MARIA MONTESSORI

DAILY SCHEDULE

2 year Old Class Schedule

8:45 AM	Arrival
8:45–9:30 AM	Free choice work time
9:30 AM	Group snack
9:45–11:30 AM	Free Choice/Circle Time Our music teacher visits every Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 to 11:30 AM. On Fridays the Library hosts story time and sign language sessions at 9:30 AM, resulting in a slight adjustment to the schedule.
11:30 AM	Dismissal for those children not eating lunch at school
11:30–12:30 PM	Lunch and play time outside
12:30 PM	Dismissal for those children not staying for after school care, nappers prepare for nap; non nappers go to room 205 for quiet time

3–5 year Old Class Schedule

8:45 AM	Arrival
8:45–9:30 AM	Free choice work time
9:30 AM	Self-Serve snack
9:45–11:30 AM	Free Choice/Circle Time Our music teacher visits every Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 to 11:30 AM. On Fridays the Library hosts story time and sign language sessions at 9:30 AM, resulting in a slight adjustment to the schedule.
11:45 AM	Dismissal for those children not eating lunch at school
11:45–12:45 PM	Lunch and play time outside
12:45 PM	Dismissal for those children not staying for after school care, nappers prepare for nap; non nappers go to room 205 for quiet time

Before School Care

7:15 – 8:45 AM	Before-school care starts at 7:15 AM and finishes at the beginning of the school day (8:45 AM). Children have the option to engage with Montessori materials and other activities provided during this period.
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After School Care

12:45 PM	Nap/Quiet Time
1:15 PM	Story Time/Structured Activity
2:00 PM	Outside Play
3:00PM	Snack
3:30–4:15 PM	Individual Discovery/Dismissal

Parent Communication

Lake Geneva Montessori School encourages parents to partner with our staff to ensure the greatest success in learning and care objectives. Parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with staff when picking up and dropping off children as well as via email.

Parent-Teacher Conferences:

2 Year Old's Class

- Parent Night and Spring parent-teacher conferences

3-5 Year Old's Class

- Parent Night and Spring parent-teacher conferences

If you wish to have a conference with your child's teacher in addition to the regularly scheduled conference, simply email Nicole Zinkowich, Montessori School Director – .nicole.zinkowich@glymca.org.

Parent Bulletin Board

The Parent bulletin board is located in the hallway and used for information such as daily schedules, emergency contacts and general announcements. Additionally, this information can be found on our website.

Newsletters

Newsletters will be emailed or posted at school monthly.

Parent Expectations

We believe that every person deserves to be treated with respect, kindness and courtesy. This applies to family members, staff and children. All adults should remember that we are role models for children. Our approach is to be gentle, be safe, be kind. Additional expectations:

- To pay fees on time
- To respond promptly to requests for your child's medical form, emergency form updates and other information
- To be on time in the morning and at pick-up time
- To follow our illness policy
- To be respectful and courteous in all communications – in person, telephone, written, or online

Health and Safety

Children are expected to be in good health and able to participate in the planned activities. Lake Geneva Montessori School has several policies and procedures that are strictly followed for the health and well being of each child in the program.

Once at school, if a child develops the following symptoms, the parent or other authorized persons will be called and may be required to pick up the child:

- Fever – over 99.5 degrees
- Flu symptoms
- Cough – severe uncontrolled coughing, wheezing or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea – runny or watery stools or blood in stool
- Vomiting
- Stomach ache – pain lasting more than one hour
- Ear ache or foreign body/injury in the ear that causes pain or bleeding
- Lacerations – a wound that will probably require sutures
- Unexplained skin rashes – especially accompanied by fever and/or behavior changes
- Unusual behavior

When your child is sick, please be sure to promptly notify your teacher of their diagnosis and treatment. Also, notify them if your child has a contagious disease or has been exposed to one. Such reports are treated with confidentiality. When necessary, staff will need to notify families of a potential exposure to a contagious disease.

Guidelines for Returning to School

Before returning to school, children should be symptom-free for 24 hours. Children may not return to school if any of the above symptoms are still present. Children who are prescribed antibiotics, in any form, are required to be on the medication for a period of 24 hours before returning to school. Physician permission to return to school is required for:

- Pink eye or conjunctivitis
- Contagious-looking rashes e.g., scabies, impetigo, scarlet fever.
- Strep throat or mouth sores with drooling
- Hepatitis in family
- Meningitis in family
- Any child that has been sick and doesn't seem to be improving.
- Any time a child is hospitalized or has a procedure done.

Medications

It is encouraged for parents to give medications to their children at home. However, if it is necessary for your child to receive medication while at Lake Geneva Montessori School, the following will apply:

- Prescriptions:

Medication must have the original pharmacy label listing the child's name, physician's name, name of medicine, issue date, dosage, expiration date, and directions for administration and storage. If your child needs to receive the medication during the day, inform the School Director or teacher in charge.

Medical Treatments

If your child is required to have one of the specific allowable treatment procedures, such as a nebulizer, Epi-pen, or blood glucose monitoring, while in care, you will be asked to complete additional permission requirements, plus demonstrate for staff the proper use of the treatment.

Nutrition

We serve children one snack a day and a lunch that is provided by the parent. If the child is participating in the After School program, then they will receive a second snack in the afternoon. We ask that parents follow Healthy Eating Guidelines. A teacher is present and adequate time is given for eating and pleasant conversation. Active involvement in food service, table set-up and clean-up is included. For children with severe food allergies, we ask parents to provide allergy appropriate snacks for their child. In the event that the parents do not supply the proper food, Lake Geneva Montessori School will provide it.

Pets

Pets are not allowed at Lake Geneva Montessori Preschool.

"THE CHILD GIVES US A BEAUTIFUL LESSON – THAT IN ORDER TO FORM AND MAINTAIN OUR INTELLIGENCE, WE MUST USE OUR HANDS." – MARIA MONTESSORI

Emergency Closings

The Lake Geneva Montessori School follows the Lake Geneva Jt 1 | Genoa City Jt 2 School Districts for weather related emergency closing. Please check our website or local news for updated information. If we should close independently of Lake Geneva Schools you will receive a call informing you.

Discipline and Guidance

The goal of Lake Geneva Montessori School discipline policy is to assist children in developing emotional regulation and self-discipline through respectful interactions that support the child's emotional growth. Minor discipline issues are handled in the classroom. If your child's behavior is very concerning we will enlist your help and work as a team to figure out the best way to handle it. Gradually, children are helped toward self-control and gain a sense of pride in their ability to care for themselves and each other.

Transportation

Lake Geneva Montessori School does not provide transportation. Any field trips we take during the year will be local walking trips.

Holidays and Celebrations

Lake Geneva Montessori School celebrates secular holidays.

- For Halloween there will be two days where students may dress in costumes and we will have special Halloween snacks and activities planned.

- Our Thanksgiving Feast days will be held on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving break. The older children will prepare the feast and invite the 2-year-olds to join them in room 205.
- At Christmas, the 2 year old's will invite their families to a craft making get together in their classroom and the older children will present a short, non-religious program for their families in the Methodist Church next door.
- We celebrate everyone's birthday with a special birthday song while the birthday child walks around the "sun" (a candle) holding a small globe. The birthday child carries the "earth" around "sun" one time for every year they've been on Earth.

Thank You

Thank you for choosing the Lake Geneva Montessori School to be your partner in the care and education of your child. If we can be of any assistance to you and your family, please feel free to contact us any time at (262) 248 -6211 ext. 70.

"WHOEVER TOUCHES THE LIFE OF THE CHILD TOUCHES THE MOST SENSITIVE POINT OF A WHOLE WHICH HAS ROOTS IN THE MOST DISTANT PAST AND CLIMBS TOWARD THE INFINITE FUTURE." – MARIA MONTESSORI

An Overview of the Montessori Method

More than 100 years ago, Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician, inspired the birth of a worldwide educational movement.

Drawing upon her scientific background and clinical understanding, Dr. Montessori observed how young people learn best when engaged in purposeful activity rather than simply being fed information. She recognized that children's cognitive growth and development requires the construction of an educational framework that respects individuality and fulfills the needs of the "whole child."

Her pioneering work created a blueprint for nurturing all children—from gifted to learning disabled—to become the self-motivated, independent, and life-long learners. That is the ultimate goal of today's pre-eminent educational reform movement.

A Brief History

Dr. Montessori first became interested in education while caring for mentally challenged children in a psychiatric clinic in Rome. Her innovative practices—including a combination of sensory-rich environments and hands-on experiential techniques—soon elicited positive learning behaviors from children previously left behind by society.

Montessori continued shaping her learning model by opening "A Children's House" in 1907 for impoverished pre-school children. Her philosophy, materials, and practices have spread around the globe and have been implemented in a variety of cultural settings. As more and more schools incorporated core elements of the Montessori model—multi-age classrooms, early childhood education, and prepared environments—her namesake method became widely recognized as being ahead of its time.

What is Montessori?

The hallmark of a Montessori program is the prepared classroom environment. Each classroom is equipped with materials that first teach through the senses and later lead to reading, writing, advanced mathematics, problem solving, geography, science and cultural studies. Visual arts, music and movement are interwoven throughout the days' activities.

Montessori infant programs foster the development of trust and assist in the natural development of the child's personality within a nurturing environment. Infants learn by touching and responding to gentle touch, and by moving freely as they interact with their surroundings. The freedom to move and explore is essential to any infant's development. Whether they are enthusiastically manipulating an interesting activity, quietly exploring the secrets of a mirror, scurrying about, or calmly enjoying a song, infants learn emotional and intellectual independence through movement.

Toddlers in a Montessori classroom are assisted as they fulfill the basic human tasks of trust, separation, independence, and self-control. Toddlers are rapidly changing in this developmental age. They learn to make order out of their surroundings, to move with intention and coordination and to communicate with others. Teachers observe each toddler and anticipate the next activity that will entice him to develop through his senses. Independence is encouraged in all things and toileting skills become a major part of the curriculum. Montessori teachers who work with this age group must have an incredible energy and deep sensitivity.

Early childhood (3-5 years) classrooms are the most common age range found in Montessori schools. Montessori early childhood programs offer the most comprehensive curriculum for parents who have the goal of preparing their child for elementary school. Nearly everything within the walls of a Montessori classroom is child-sized. Children “work” with authentic Montessori materials including a wide range of high-quality, age-appropriate materials—objects such as wooden blocks, sand trays, textured fabrics, and glass beads, to name just a few. All of the materials are designed to be self-teaching. Children learn to solve problems, see natural connections in knowledge, learn skills related to practical living, and therefore, expand their imaginative thinking.

Perhaps the hands-on materials, carefully selected and placed on child-height shelves, everything in its place and on view for children to select, is the element that joins Montessori schools together. Materials other than open-ended ones have a control of error built into their design. Children can see and learn from their own mistakes without a teacher pointing out the error. This is one of the many aspects of a Montessori classroom that fosters independence.

Operating on the principle of freedom within limits, Montessori schools inspire children to work at their own pace, alone or with others. Trained, certified Montessori teachers encourage the growth of self-motivated, independent children by balancing active, self-directed learning with small group collaboration and peer teaching. Classes are comprised of a range of ages and abilities. Older, more experienced children take on the role of peer mentors, reinforcing their own skills and experiencing the responsibilities of leadership through helping others. Younger children, in turn, enjoy the daily stimulation of older role models, while children of all ages learn to respect each other in a warm atmosphere of acceptance and joy.

As students move into multi-aged elementary classrooms, and their cognitive processes mature, hands-on materials are used to teach new concepts. Abstract thinking takes hold and students problem solve using group discussion, research and writing skills, and technology. Field trips, many over several days, become the hands-on experiences for Montessori students in this age range. Classrooms still promote the freedom to choose and students set daily and weekly personal agendas to assist in the completion of the curriculum work. Collaborative projects, science experiments, oral, written, and audio/visual presentations take careful planning and larger amounts of time. Respect, responsibility, and character development are woven into curriculum units.

Middle and High School Montessori students learn through doing as they experience personal rapid growth and change. Students are empowered as they hone their individual and group cooperation skills. Schools promote community service, community building, independent research projects and internships in real work situations. Frequently an internship period is spent in the lower grades of the school enabling middle and high school students to participate in cross-age teaching. Students learn the skill of giving presentations to peers and community groups. Many Montessori schools encourage student-run businesses to exercise cooperative and practical application of the skills learned in class and during their internships. School socials, including plays, movies, and dances are part of the curriculum as well.

Montessori Today

Remarkably, Maria Montessori's visionary ideas remain viable concepts that have profoundly influenced the entire educational landscape.

Today Dr. Montessori's visionary ideas flourish as the cornerstone of a thriving educational practice. There are thousands of Montessori schools in the U.S. including hundreds of programs in public and charter schools. The American Montessori Society, www.amshq.org with its headquarters in NYC, has over 10,000 members, and close to 1,200 member schools and 92 accredited teacher education programs, throughout the US and internationally.

About the Author:

Dr. Kathy Roemer earned a Doctorate in education from the University of Memphis; a Masters degree in Montessori education from Christian Brothers University in Memphis; and a Bachelor's degree in anthropology from Temple University in Philadelphia. She is certified as an early childhood director and holds a certificate for advanced professional education from the American Montessori Society (AMS). From 1995 to 2004, she held the position of Head of School at Lamplighter Montessori School in Memphis, Tennessee.

Dr. Kathy Roemer joined Twin Parks Montessori Schools in August 2004, with 21 years of experience as a Montessori teacher, director, consultant, and Vice President of the AMS Board of Directors. A charter member of the AMS School Accreditation Commission, she chaired the Commission for four years. Her articles have been published in Montessori Life, the journal of the American Montessori Society.

This article can be found at

www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/Montessori/montessorioverview

Commonly Asked Questions about Montessori Schools and Preschool Education

Why should I send my child to preschool?

The single most important period in the development of a person's intelligence occurs between birth and age five. A child's mind is extremely absorbent and his or her curiosity is at a peak during these early years. When properly nourished and stimulated, the child's mind forms patterns for learning that serve them well throughout life. The Montessori system of preschool education has proven to be one of the most effective and fastest-growing methods to guide a child through these critical years.

What is the difference between Child Care Centers and Preschools?

Child Care Centers (aka Daycare or Nursery) are generally for the purpose of caring for children while parents work and offer socialization and play-based activities. Preschools offer age-appropriate educational experiences combined with socialization and play and may have teachers trained in a specific educational methodology or philosophy.

How is the Montessori Preschool Program different from other Preschools?

In most preschools a teacher teaches the children educational concepts in a group, all learning the same thing at the same time, whether they are developmentally ready or not. In Montessori schools children learn concepts spontaneously, working independently choosing their own "work" from the many materials in the environment, and progressing at their own pace, with gentle guidance, in a way that fosters independence and a desire to learn more.

What is the Montessori Method of Education?

The Montessori method of education is a unique approach to learning. Rather than "teaching" the child concepts, an environment is designed to stimulate the child's interest and facilitate their understanding and learning capacities spontaneously with little or no adult intervention.

What is the purpose of the Montessori method?

The main purpose of the Montessori method is to develop an environment where the child can unfold spontaneously and manifest the greater person within. As the child begins to develop this inner self, his or her love of life and learning expands continuously and continues into adulthood.

Who started the Montessori Method?

Dr. Maria Montessori, over 70 years ago, was Italy's first women medical doctor. Using her scientific background, she began observing children in the children's houses in Rome. Based on her unbiased observations she developed unique materials, a child-centered environment, and was one of the first persons to revolutionize educational thought by stressing respect for the child, freedom of expression, self-education, and training through the use of movement and the senses.

What is the classroom environment like?

The classroom is a child-size world. Whatever is in the world outside can be incorporated meaningfully in the Montessori classroom. To a child, the world is unmanageable – it is too big, too complex and too confusing. Careful selection of materials creates an environment set up to allow children to explore life at a level they can understand. Materials or exercises are then designed to stimulate independent exploration. This prepared environment entices the child to proceed at his/her own pace from simple activities to more complex ones. Through this process, their natural curiosity is satisfied and they begin to experience the joy of discovering the world around them. Materials and curriculum center around practical life, sensorial, language, math, and cultural lessons, and within those areas incorporate geography, science, art, music and movement.

How do children interact in the environment?

As the children develop their sense of pride in their “work”, a feeling of confidence, joy, and well-being begins to manifest itself in the child. A “new child” is born. The classroom is a joy to watch. There is an obvious spirit of respect, love, and cooperation among the children that is not often found.

What is the role of the Montessori teacher?

The Montessori teacher is called a Director/Directress because she facilitates the classroom activity. She carefully plans the environment in the interests of the children and she helps the children progress from one activity to the next. She is trained to deal with each child individually, allowing the child to choose from many activities within their range of ability. The directress stands back while a child is working and allows them the satisfaction of their own discovery.

With all the freedom, isn't there confusion?

The concept of freedom within the classroom is one of freedom within limits. A child is allowed to work freely so long as he or she does not disturb others. Actually, with our children having the freedom to follow their interests, they are generally happy and busily involved with their work.

What is the best age to start my child?

Maria Montessori outlined various periods of “sensitivity”. During these times a child is more capable of and interested in learning specific concepts. At age 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 a special sense of order, concentration, coordination, and independence begin to emerge. This time is ideal to begin a child's training in Montessori, as he/she is at the perfect period to build a strong foundation for future learning.

How do Montessori children adjust to public schools?

Children who have been in a Montessori program are generally very flexible and adjust quite easily to public school situations. They are generally better students and spend their time in more productive ways because of their self-direction and positive attitude toward learning. They often prefer more educational activities than plan-based activities when given the choice.

What about socialization and group work?

Socialization is very much a part of a child's day. In the classroom, you will notice children interacting continuously, choosing to work on projects together, and older children helping younger ones. Each day there is some group activity and outside play.

Who is the Montessori method designed for?

The Montessori method is an "approach to learning" and as such has no distinction of class or intelligence. It has been used successfully in all parts of the world and in all types of programs (i.e. Head start, gifted and learning-impaired, public and charter schools, etc.) Dr. Maria Montessori believed the classroom should reflect the greater community and include children from all different backgrounds, abilities, and ethnicities, with children learning to respect and appreciate all and working together.

I've heard Montessori Schools are expensive, are they?

Tuition in Montessori preschools throughout the country is generally higher than in other preschools because of the extensive custom-made wood materials used for everything from the lesson materials to child-size furniture, shelving, to the custom-made child-size counters and sinks, the highly trained staff, and environment-friendly practices. Many other preschools use plastic toys and materials that are not typically used in Montessori schools. Montessori teacher certification is additional training that typically takes two years to complete and includes a nine-month teaching practicum.

If you consider the cost of a traditional preschool plus the extra activities you may be paying for, like dance, music, etc., it becomes more comparable and a matter of what you value most. To give your child the finest possible experience in his or her most sensitive years is to give them a strong foundation throughout life. Many educators believe that it is wiser to invest in a child's preschool education than his college education. The child who enjoys learning and becomes self-directed at the critical preschool age will benefit through all his years of learning. The expense now is a profitable long-term investment.