

Kalispell
Montessori
Education
ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL

Parent Handbook

2016-2017

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MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

Our Mission Statement

The Kalispell Montessori Center, Inc. fosters the natural spirit of inquiry and thrill of discovery within each child by upholding the Montessori philosophy that learning is best achieved within a social atmosphere that supports each individual's unique academic, physical, and emotional development.

EEO/AAS and Non-discrimination policy

The Kalispell Montessori Center, Inc. will conduct all activities relative to recruiting, selection, placement, promotion, compensation, working condition, training, demotion, layoff and termination based solely on qualifications, or merit, without regard to race, creed, religion, color or because of age, physical or mental disability, marital status, or sex (except as a bona-fide occupational qualification). The same standard applies to admissions and all school-administered functions and policies.

Family Partnership

Our school is committed to providing the best possible learning environment for your child. In turn, we ask that our parents are committed to supporting our staff and Montessori philosophy/practice in both school matters and in their home environment. The importance of this partnership is so essential that we require parents to sign a Family Partnership Agreement that outlines specific responsibilities and expectations for both the school and the family. Please refer to this document in the Appendix (A1.).

Montessori Philosophy

Maria Montessori conceived her approach to education in the early 1900s. Her educational ideas grew out of her experiences, first as a physician with mentally handicapped children, and later as an innovative organizer of day care centers and schools for children. Dr. Montessori's ideas were forerunners of contemporary ideas we know as "individualized learning" and the "open-classroom structure." Among Montessori's original contributions are:

- 1) The identification of early childhood as a distinct period of life, with certain specific needs and characteristics of its own.
- 2) The idea of "sensitive periods" of development during which a child is highly receptive to certain learning.
- 3) The emphasis on concrete materials for the teaching of concepts.
- 4) Recognition of the importance of repetitive behavior associated with emerging mental abilities.

- 5) The basic design for an educational environment, which fosters the development of autonomy in the individual and recognizes the interdependence of freedom and discipline.

The Kalispell Montessori Center Philosophy

There is no copyright to either the Montessori name or Montessori ideas. Although this makes possible a widespread application of Montessori's theories, it also allows for a great deal of public confusion as to what Montessori education is all about. The reality is that Montessori teachers and schools interpret Montessori in different ways.

At Kalispell Montessori, we believe that Dr. Maria Montessori, on the basis of astute observation and tremendous insight, developed an integrated educational scheme, which is still the best model available for early childhood and elementary programs. The elementary program devised by Dr. Montessori fits the more abstract mind of the six to twelve year old student and is a model for partnership learning by our elementary staff.

The implementation of our philosophy starts with Montessori's insights, and builds with new information as it becomes available. In our view, one goal underlies our whole approach: to promote the child's growth toward autonomy (a state of being that is capable of self-nurturing and self-government of both personal and social responsibility). Montessori's concerns about the world's problems led to her vision of the "ideal adult" as an informed person who could think for himself and do for himself, as well as take his share of social responsibility...in short, an autonomous being.

ADMISSIONS AND ATTENDANCE

KME offers programs for students in grades 1-6. KME does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or political belief. Each application for admission is assessed individually, pursuant to the enrollment criteria for the programs and curriculum of KME

Our environment adapts to students of varying academic ability and diverse learning styles. Children with exceptional needs (behavioral/emotional, developmental, learning differences) are accepted at KME if the administration, instructors, and parents feel the child's needs will be met within the KME setting. We will limit the number of students who require additional staff resources to ensure that all students fairly receive appropriate instruction and attention. The school makes every reasonable attempt to guide children to success in the program. Nevertheless, all new students are admitted with a 60-day probationary status.

1. For a child to be considered for 1st year admission, s/he must:
 - ✓ Fall within the District 5 guidelines for age
 - ✓ Be able to verbalize his/her needs
 - ✓ Respect classroom rules and relate positively to peers and adults
 - ✓ Concentrate and complete tasks
 - ✓ Take direction from an adult
 - ✓ Make work choices independently

2. Each inquiring family will be given an Admission Packet, which requests basic information about the applying student and family. It also contains information about tuition, fees, schedules and payment options.. A visit to the school may or may not be arranged at the time of inquiry. The visit is mandatory prior to any placement of new students. The Administration, along with the teaching staff, will determine if the student is appropriate based on the above criteria and the family is notified of the determination.

If current enrollment allows, the deposit is due, and the new student can begin school as soon as desired. If current enrollment is at capacity, the Administrator will hold the enrollment information for the balance of the school year or until classroom demographics change and the new student can be accommodated. This is considered our “waiting pool.”

Families seeking enrollment are given priority based on the following guidelines:

1. Students with siblings currently attending Woodland Montessori or KME.
2. Kindergarten students from Woodland Montessori
3. Students from families previously enrolled at KME
4. Students who have spent time in a Montessori environment
5. 5. Students with most recent application date

Tuition and Fees

The annual admissions packet contains updated tuition and fee schedules. See Appendix (A.2.)

Scholarships

The school makes all efforts to provide academic scholarships based primarily on financial need. The amount of award money varies from year to year. An application packet is made available in the spring at the same time re-enrollment information is distributed.

School Hours and Attendance

Student drop-off begins at 8:15. Morning stretches begin at 8:30 and students not present during stretches will be considered tardy. Drivers- PLEASE DO NOT exit your vehicle in the drop off line. Please park if you need to talk with someone or otherwise remain on the campus. Please do not drop off before 8:15. There will be no outdoor supervision and you will be charged for Before School Care.

The school day ends at 3:15. Teachers or an authorized staff member must sign out all students when they leave. Drivers- PLEASE DO NOT exit your vehicle in the pick up line. Please park if you need to talk with someone or otherwise remain on the campus. Students not picked up by 3:30 will be charged for After School Care.

Release of Children

Children will only be released to drivers other than parents who are listed on the emergency information form. Exceptions must be made in writing in advance. It is understandable that unplanned situations arise and last minute arrangements may need to be made regarding the pick-up of children. In these cases, please call the school and provide a detailed description of the person who will be picking up your child. Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school in writing of any special custody arrangements. Parents/guardians will be asked to provide evidence of any legal action, which curtails the non-custodial parent's rights.

Before and After School Care

Before and After Care is available between the hours of 8:00 - 8:15 a.m., and between 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. The parent(s) will be billed separately for this service. A monthly and hourly rate schedule can be obtained from Administration. See Appendix (A.2)

Pick-up after 5:35 p.m. is considered late. There is no grace period. A \$1.00 late fee will be assessed for each minute after 5:35 p.m., payable to the Childcare Staff on duty. Excessive tardiness in picking-up your children after 5:45 p.m. may warrant loss of the child care service.

Before and After Care may be denied to students for disruptive behavior. It is especially important for all Staff to have access to work and cell phone numbers, in order that the parents may be reached in an emergency. Please make sure the emergency form in your child's file is kept current.

School Closure/Emergencies

KME follows the District 5 decisions on weather related closure. If you feel it is not safe to travel, please stay home and phone in to the school. In the event of an evacuation due to flooding, the primary evacuation route for the students is to follow is:

- ✓ South on Willow Glen to Woodland Avenue,
- ✓ Go up Woodland to 10th Avenue, and
- ✓ Turn in to East Side Park.
- ✓ Staff will improvise if this route is blocked or has other hazards.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Illness

Please inform the office if your child will be absent due to illness. Children should be kept home if they are exhibiting one or more of these symptoms:

- ✓ 99-100 degree temperature with symptoms, 100 degrees or over without symptoms
- ✓ sore throat
- ✓ runny nose/eyes

- ✓ coughing
- ✓ sneezing
- ✓ intestinal upset
- ✓ diarrhea and/or vomiting

A child who has vomited, had a fever, or diarrhea, must wait 24 hours after these symptoms subside before returning to school. All communicable diseases must be reported to the office immediately and a doctor's written release may be required before re-admission. Communicable diseases include but are not limited to:

- ✓ chicken pox
- ✓ measles
- ✓ mumps
- ✓ streptococcal infections
- ✓ scabies
- ✓ conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- ✓ impetigo
- ✓ head lice
- ✓ ringworm
- ✓ pinworms

All parents will be notified of the existence of a communicable disease at school. If a child is deemed too ill to be in school, and/or exhibiting symptoms such as a runny nose with colored discharge or fever, parents will be called to take the child home.

Medications

A medication release form completed and signed by the parents must be submitted to the school office prior to a Staff member dispensing any medication. The form must include the following information: type of medication to be given, method of administration, dosage, and time to be given, starting/ending dates. The medication must be in its original container with the prescription label affixed with the child's name. This is true for over-the-counter medications as well as prescription medications (including inhalers and epi-pens). All medications must be given to one of the child's teachers and may not be stored in lunch boxes.

Allergies

Please notify the school **IN WRITING** of any food and medication allergies along with **WRITTEN** instructions on procedures for treating an allergic reaction.

School Accidents

An Incident Report will be provided to parents in case of minor accidents at school. In case of any kind of head injury, including eye, ear or mouth, the parents will be immediately contacted by telephone. In rare situations where immediate medical attention is required, the school will

phone 911 and contact the parents. If it is necessary to transport a child to a hospital, one of the staff will accompany and stay with the child until the parents arrive.

Child Abuse

Montana Code Annotated (41-3-201 through 208) designates all school employees as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. When an employee knows or reasonably suspects abuse or neglect due to information received in his/her official capacity, he/she must report it to Montana Child and Family Services.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Classrooms

Maria Montessori believed that mixed-age classrooms promote an atmosphere of cooperative learning, teamwork, peer teaching, and one that encourages social interaction for emotional development. Families are expected to have their children remain through the 3-year cycle of their respective programs. In classrooms, large blocks of uninterrupted time are scheduled so as to develop patterns of concentration, positive work habits of task completion and thoroughness. Group activity or “circle” takes place where peace education, community, self and environment awareness, as well as character are discussed. Sharing, cultural education, and birthday celebrations also take place during “circle.”

The cornerstone of the Montessori educational approach is the Three Period Lesson. The first period of The Three Period Lesson consists of observing, identifying, and internalizing. The second period consists of recognition and involves active, hands-on experience and exploration. The third period is remembrance or abstraction and verbalization of its meaning. This educational technique is used from primary through upper elementary levels and enables the teachers to gauge a child’s understanding of the work. The classroom is equipped with Montessori materials that are sequential and generally self-correcting. The materials correspond to the developmentally “sensitive periods” for learning and will be used differently as the child progresses developmentally.

Conferencing and Observation (Visits)

Formal parent/teacher conferences are scheduled in November and March. Parents are responsible for signing up with the appropriate teacher. Other conferences can be scheduled as needed. Please be aware of and sensitive to the teachers’ time before and after school. This is not a good time to pull them aside to discuss issues. Please schedule appointments for such interactions. Parents are welcome to observe and participate during the school day. Please notify teachers AT LEAST one day in advance to make sure a visit would be appropriate. If visits are disruptive to student productivity or classroom routine, they will not be allowed.

Homework and Testing

As a general rule, no homework is assigned. Students are expected to be productive throughout the day and have family time after school. We do encourage intellectual pursuits as one part of family activities. Reading to students and listening to students read is one of the most important things you can do.

Montessori philosophy does not place an emphasis on standardized testing. Students are tested once per year and the results are used diagnostically only, not comparatively. For older students the testing also serves to give them some practice for future testing when they transition from Montessori.

Accountability and Responsibility (peace, grace and courtesy)

Responsibility and accountability are fundamental to Montessori education. The community setting in the classroom nurtures responsible social behavior. Regardless of age and level, students actively take care of their environment. Students are encouraged to assume responsibility for their behavior. Students are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning. Assignment of non-academic jobs to students is a feature of the daily activities. Accountability is introduced gradually and increases as the child matures. Grace and Courtesy groups meet regularly to discuss various social skills and gain practice in character building activities.

Confidentiality

All personal information given to KME is kept in strict confidence. Access is limited to the Administration, employees designated by the Administration, Board Members, and authorized representatives of the State of Montana, as appropriate, or by subpoena. Staff may not release addresses or phone numbers of other families. Participation in the Parent Directory is optional. Distribution of the directory and information contained therein is limited to families of students currently enrolled in CMS. The Parent Directory cannot be used for business purposes as this could jeopardize our non-profit status.

Lunch and Snack

Students may bring a lunch from home or purchase a school lunch. No refrigeration will be provided for home lunch; please use an appropriate lunchbox and ice pack. Morning snack is provided for Elementary I students and parents are charged a monthly fee. Elementary II students may bring their own morning snack.

Messages

All messages regarding your child should be in written form. Written notes enable the staff to efficiently organize and disseminate the daily communication. It is important that any

communication be in writing regarding observations, concerns, schedule changes, instructions, etc. Teachers are not available to speak on the phone during class time. To leave a message for a teacher or student, call the school at 755-3826 and leave a complete message. All reasonable efforts will be made to check messages throughout the school day.

School Attire

Children should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the season, outdoor play and physical education. Students should wear clothes and shoes s/he can manage him/herself. Clothing promoting aggressive commercial characters or displaying offensive language is prohibited. Jewelry and watches are strongly discouraged for primary students, since they are often distracting, and may be removed at the discretion of the staff.

We encourage the child to take responsibility for remembering to take home jackets at the end of the day. Please help your child recognize and be able to identify his own clothing, jackets, and lunch bag. Your encouragement will help the child learn to take responsibility for personal property. PLEASE LABEL everything you want to keep! Unmarked items will go to the lost and found.

Lost and Found

Lost and found is located in a plastic bin inside the Multi-Purpose Room (Library). As the bin gets full, items are moved to the shed. We will give at least one week notice before we donate the items to charity.

Bringing Things from Home

Children may share books, pictures, unique educational toys, or natural phenomena from home. Please keep dolls, cars, guns, electronics, trading cards, and other toys at home or in your car. We encourage items that relate to special projects at school. Safe sports equipment for sharing on the playground is welcome.

CELEBRATIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Birthdays

Regardless of the obvious convenience of delivering birthday invitations at school, we request that they be delivered through the mail or over the phone. Children get so excited about birthday parties that discretion is impossible. No one can invite everyone. We would like to prevent hurt feelings whenever possible and that is why we prefer these invitations be mailed. Parents are invited to attend birthday circle for their child during the school day. Times for birthdays circle can be arranged with the teachers.

Orientation

Orientation is an early evening gathering of all parents and staff. Staff members introduce themselves briefly and news for the upcoming school year is shared. Parent packets containing mandatory forms, sign-up sheets, and other information are handed out. We will also provide time for a brief question and answer period. A potluck meal afterwards provides an opportunity for socializing and meeting teachers. Attendance counts for one parent volunteer hour.

Halloween

Elementary I and Elementary II plan their own parties and classroom activities. Wednesday envelopes will have detailed information on these events.

Thanksgiving

The Thanksgiving Harvest Feast takes place on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Children and staff join in the fun and good food. Students help prepare food for the gathering. Following the feast, classes resume as usual. This is not an early dismissal day.

The Winter Holiday

December is a lot of fun, and it is one of the busiest times of the year. The Holiday Program, craft day, student-made parent gifts, student gift exchange, and pajama day keep us hopping. Please check Wednesday envelopes for details and volunteer opportunities.

Valentine's Day

Our celebration of Valentine's Day is a wonderful experience that further generates the feeling of community. Class lists are provided to make sure ALL classmates are included in the Valentine exchange.

Elizabethan Festival

Each spring both elementary I & II students present Shakespearean plays, sonnets, and dances. The entire Montessori community and the public is invited to attend. Much class time is spent in rehearsing and preparing for the performance. The exposure to Shakespearean literature as well as the skills gained in public speaking and cooperation makes this an important activity in fulfilling our mission.

FUNDRAISING

Funds raised above and beyond the school's revenue from tuition allow purchases and upgrades to be made that would not be covered by the annual budget. This enables the school to maintain high standards in the prepared environment. Our main fundraising events, some of which we partner with Woodland Montessori, include:

- ✓ Montessori Mile
- ✓ Harvest Festival and Auction
- ✓ Trivia Nights
- ✓ Art to Remember
- ✓ Carnival

As a side benefit to raising money, the process of fundraising is community-building. Fundraising is also a valuable way to contribute to the volunteer service hours required of each family. The level of success in fundraising is directly connected to the amount of family involvement. Even a small amount of participation on the part of each family can achieve noteworthy goals.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Disciplinary issues are handled on a case by case basis. If interventions with the student are not effective, parents will be notified to set up a conference. Students may be restricted from recess or other activities if their behavior is disruptive or overtly inappropriate. Bullying is taken very seriously and all efforts are made to educate the students on the many types of bullying and the detrimental effects. Physical violence of any sort is not tolerated. Consequences may range from suspension to expulsion.

PARENT STAFF RELATIONS

Conflict Resolution – Adults

Co-operating and problem solving are ongoing and essential parts of staff and parents' days too. From time to time, adults may experience an offense, or conflict, in the otherwise smooth running of the school. We wish that these experiences would never happen, but due to our humanity, they do. The goal is to have adults solve their own problems at the smallest group level. Staff members and board members are available to mediate conflicts all the way to resolution. We wish to empower all staff and parents with these important skills.

We wish to be clear: this conflict resolution process is not mandatory for parent to parent conflicts, but is available to parents if they wish. This process is mandatory, however, for parent to staff, teacher, or administrator, and among staff or board members.

If a staff member has a problem with another staff member, the administrator, or a parent, or if a parent has a problem with a teacher, staff member, or the administrator or another parent, these are the appropriate steps to take:

1. Ask to meet about the problem and use conflict resolution techniques to come to a resolution.
2. If resolution cannot be reached in an oral manner, the problem shall be put in writing, submitted to the administrator and all parties involved, and another meeting shall be called with the administrator and/or a mediator.

3. The mediator can be a lead teacher, the administrator, a board member, or another parent.
4. The administrator and/ or the mediator will gather all facts pertinent to the matter, review the information with the parties involved, and attempt to offer a solution verbally and in writing.
5. If resolution is still not reached, a written description should be submitted to the board of directors for review within 10 days. The board will appoint a three person committee (composed of teacher and parent members) to gather facts and meet again with persons involved.
6. The problem will be discussed in the presence of the employee, parent, and administrator.
7. Final resolution will be made and discussed with all parties within 30 days of the committee meeting.
8. The final decision will be put in writing, and a copy given to all parties involved, with the original kept by the President of the Board of Directors.
9. The decision of the committee shall be final and binding.