



MONTESSORI
SCHOOL *of* ITHACA

TEACH PEACE

Nurturing the hearts, minds, and spirit
of children for 38 years!

Junior Level
Handbook
2017 - 2018

120 East King Road Ithaca, NY 14850
Phone 607/277-7335 Fax 607/277-0251
www.eacmsi.org

Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year!

Dear Families,

From September through June, EACMSI is home to hundreds of human beings of varying sizes: students, parents, faculty and staff. We make community together by establishing and reaffirming relationships. Our goal is to create a mindful and just society that allows each being to do their best work.

The protocols and expectations made explicit herein serve as guidelines to follow as we journey forward together.

We ask you to familiarize yourself with the basic principles and goals of Montessori pedagogy. This will allow a greater appreciation for your child's school experience. Please keep abreast of current activities by reading our school newsletter and bulletin emails. Plan on attending school functions as this enhances EACMSI's long term effect on your child's life and promotes a bond between home and school.

This handbook includes a brief history, a description of your role as an EACMSI parent and community member, information about our policies and procedures, and Montessori educational resources. Please take the time to read through your handbook in its entirety. Even if you are a returning parent, please commit to reading through this year's revised and updated edition.

Happy reading!

Laura Gottfried
Principal

Table of Contents

About EACMSI	4
Contact Information	5
Website/Facebook/Instagram	6
Things You Should Know	6
Arrival	7
Dismissal	7
After School Care	8
Before School Care	8
Vacation	9
Cancellation/Delays	9
Attendance	9
Health	9
Mental Health	10
Medication	10
Nutrition	11
Immunization	11
Physical Education	12
Footwear	12
Recess	12
Independence at School	13
School to Home Connection	14
Homework	14
Birthdays	15
Classroom Observations	15
Conference/Report Forms	15
Technology	15
Toys/Games/Cell Phones	16
Classroom Placement Policy	16
Behavior Shaping Policy	16
Montessori Terminology	18

About EACMSI

Established in 1979, The Elizabeth Ann Clune Montessori School of Ithaca (EACMSI) is a non-profit educational organization offering classes for children ages 3-15. The Montessori school of Ithaca was founded in 1979 by Andrea Blitzer Riddle and Carol Hill. In 1998, the Montessori School of Ithaca was renamed the Elizabeth Ann Clune Montessori School of Ithaca, in honor of one of our most beloved students: Elizabeth Ann Clune. The incredible success and longevity of EACMSI can be attributed to Andrea Riddle's unique vision of what it means to be a school; she blurred the usual boundaries between school, extended family and community. To this day, when parents enroll their children at EACMSI, the family as a whole is embraced and welcomed. As a result, EACMSI is a dynamic, deeply connected, and constantly evolving community: people of all ages come together to inspire the best in all.

The mission of our school is to guide the development of children towards becoming independent, responsible, contributing individuals. We educate children in an atmosphere which promotes respect and dignity for themselves, for others, and for the world in which we live.

The EAC Montessori School is a community of diverse cultures, languages, religions, and nationalities. The common denominator is an unshakeable faith in the giftedness of all people and their ability to realize their fullest potential in an environment where it is safe for them to explore with all of their senses – and to make mistakes. The Elizabeth Ann Clune Montessori School of Ithaca admits students of any gender, gender identity or expression, race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of gender, gender identity or expression, race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational and admissions policies.

EACMSI is affiliated with organizations established to promote standards of excellence. These organizations assure the highest quality Montessori educational standards are being followed by our school.

Member: American Montessori Society
Accredited by: New York State Board of Regents (permanent charter)

As members of a community who teach respectful communication, we expect all adults to model a high level of regard and consideration for each other, *even when there is disagreement regarding an issue*. It is only through a cooperative effort between the school and the parents that your child is assured of the highest quality education.

Open communication is essential for optimal home and school partnership. Please share any concerns or questions you have regarding your child.

Contact Information

Your child or the class	Questions for Teachers	eacmsi.org/faculty-and-staff/
	Questions for Administration: Laura Gottfried	lgottfried@eacmsi.org
	General Inquiries	admin@eacmsi.org
School policy	Laura Gottfried	lgottfried@eacmsi.org
Health /wellness issues and/or Special Education Services	Anne Robbins	arobbins@eacmsi.org
Payment of tuition and/or financial questions	Lisa Smith Whitney Wiggins	lisa@eacmsi.org wwiggins@eacmsi.org
Classroom observations	Anne Robbins	arobbins@eacmsi.org
After School Program	Cindy Rice	afterschool@eacmsi.org
School Nurses		nurse@eacmsi.org
Donations, fundraising, events & marketing	Wendy Houseworth	whouseworth@eacmsi.org
All other faculty and staff		eacmsi.org/faculty-and-staff/

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring the financial health of the school. Please feel free to contact Board President Lisa Swayze if the need arises at lswayze1962@gmail.com. All board of trustee information can be found at <http://eacmsi.org/administration/>

Transportation

Contact your local district:	Ithaca:	274-2128
	Lansing:	533-4608
	Newfield:	564-9955
	Dryden:	844-4221
	Trumansburg:	387-5610

Smart Tuition is responsible for the processing of tuition and fees for the 2017-2018 school year. All tuition payments are due by the first of the month and can be made online at parent.smarttuition.com or by mailing your check to Smart Tuition. Please be sure to include your Smart Tuition Family ID on all checks. Please do not send tuition payments to EAC. If you have questions about your online account or how to make a payment, please visit eacmsi.org/my-eac/tuition-management/ or call the Smart Tuition Parent Call Center at (888)868-8828.

What You Will Find On Our Website

<http://www.eacmsi.org/>

Check our website regularly as it is one of the primary ways we will communicate what is happening at school. Look for detailed information about all of our programs and different events that happen throughout the year. Navigate to “**My EAC**” to find all the things necessary for the school year. This password protected page includes class lists, supply lists, all required forms, this handbook, health and wellness information, The Weekly Bulletin, volunteer opportunities and our school **Calendar**. (Events can be downloaded to your iPhone or Google calendar.)

What You Will Find On Our Facebook Page

<http://www.facebook.com/eacmsi>

We encourage you to “Like” our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram ([instagram.com/eacmsi /](https://www.instagram.com/eacmsi/)) to stay abreast of daily life at EACMSI.

The EACMSI Facebook page is the go-to place for parenting and education resources, photos and videos of all things EACMSI, including reminders about upcoming events and news about our alumni.

Things You Should Know

As children form and develop they take from the environment what is needed for self-construction; the child is driven by an inner need to learn about themselves and their world. They want very much to develop their intelligence and to become independent and responsible. Each Montessori classroom is a well prepared environment designed to support the child’s need for learning and growth. It is a “child’s house” where there are carefully designed materials to meet the child’s natural interests. The atmosphere is positive, supportive, and noncompetitive. The classroom has five distinct areas (practical life, language, math and geometry, and cultural) that provide developmentally appropriate experiences for the child. You can learn more about our core programs at <http://eacmsi.org/programs-overview/>.

The program at the Junior Level rests on the foundation prepared in the Primary Level where the child's inquiring mind gathers names and facts. What and where were the interest then. Now the child's mind begins to function in a new way. Why, how, and when the consuming interests and all the names and facts acquired before are used by the child to become more proficient in language skills and math. Junior level launches our Cosmic Curriculum, the integrated study of humanities and the sciences. We give the child a vision of the whole universe so they may discover their place within. Learn more about the Junior Level curriculum at <http://eacmsi.org/the-junior-level-curriculum/>

Arrival

The front entrance to the Main Building will be open from 8:30 to 9:30 am, and 3:00-4:00 pm daily.

Students are welcome in classrooms at 8:30 am Classes begin at 9:00 am.

You may not pass a school bus with blinking lights or park in the Fire Lane under any circumstances as *it is against the law*. Our driveway is a one-way circle, so please follow the traffic pattern.

If you are coming into the school, please park in the lot. Children will be met in the front hall by a teacher during the first 2 weeks of school. If you arrive after 9:00 am please bring your child to the office before they enter their classroom.

Parents are asked to support our efforts to create prepared environments for their children. This can be done by *respecting the blue lines* that demark the foyer from classrooms and abiding by pick-up and drop-off protocol. The prepared environment is critical if our students are to reap the maximum benefit from our programs. Laura, Anne and our front office staff are always available to answer questions, deliver a message, or hear a concern.

Should your child have difficulty coming into class, a staff member will assist your child and will attend to their needs in a caring and encouraging way. Parents best support these transitions by projecting confidence in their child's ability to separate and be independent. You are encouraged to call us if you have any concerns about your child's transition to school.

Dismissal for Junior Level Students

Primary pick-up occurs between 3:00 and 3:30 pm at the main school entrance.

School district buses will arrive at Montessori at 3:05 pm and depart by 3:20 pm from the Andrea B. Riddle Center for Music, Movement and Arts (ABR center) parking area.

Remember: Our driveway is a one-way circle, so please follow the traffic pattern. Park in the lot and walk into the building for your child. You may not park in the Fire Lane under any circumstances as it is against the law.

Keeping our students safe is critical. *PickUp Patrol* is our online system for parents to communicate dismissal plan changes to the school. Changes can be entered from a smartphone, tablet, or computer, days, weeks, or even months in advance and at any time up until 2:15 pm on the day of the change. For dismissal changes after 2:15 pm please call the school office at 607.277.7335. The end of the school day is a busy time, so please plan accordingly and limit these exceptions to emergencies if possible. Please use *PickUp Patrol* to fill out your default dismissal information, and make any daily dismissal changes.

When you arrive at the end of the day, one of our staff will call your child from their classroom. This minimizes disruption in the classrooms. **Children who are not picked up by 3:45 pm will be sent to our Afterschool Program and a \$22.00 fee will be charged. There will be no exceptions.** As our Afterschool program is generally full, please make every effort to be on time at the end of the day.

Early pick-up: Please allow a 15-minute window for children needing to be picked up early.

After School Program

The After School program begins at 3:30 pm and children are to be picked up promptly by 5:30 pm. Each child's readiness and individual needs are taken into consideration for acceptance in the After School program. The After School program begins at 3:30 pm and children are to be picked up promptly by 5:30 pm. Families must register their child(ren) in advance for regular attendance, and may register for up to 5 days per week. Days of use may only be changed when space and staffing allow. For additional days beyond your regular schedule, if we can accommodate your child, a daily use rate of \$22.00 per day will be charged. Please be aware that the program may be full on a given day that you need it. **Requests for drop in After School care should be made directly to the office as early in the day as possible.**

During all staff development meetings, we do NOT offer After School care, for the 2017-18 year these dates are 10/3/17, 1/30/18 and 4/3/18.

Before School Program

We offer before-school care for students during the school year from 7:45-8:30am each morning in the Common Room. This program is available as a full time (5 days a week) or flexible (as needed) option and will be billed via Smart Tuition. Our Before School Care is currently limited to 10 students per day. Parents should bring their child(ren) to the Common Room door each day and check-in with the teacher. All invoices and payments will be made through Smart Tuition.

Vacation Days

We offer February and Spring Break camps for our Primary/Extended day and Junior Level students. Break camp registrations will become available 2 months prior to camp.

School Cancellations and Delays

If the Ithaca City Schools are closed for bad weather, then we are also closed. If the Ithaca City Schools are on a 2-hour delay, we are also on a 2-hour delay - doors will open at 10:30 am and there will be no before school care or band practice.

Attendance

We expect that children will attend school on a daily basis and we do expect children to be on time. Excessive absences or tardiness are disruptive for the child and the classroom. Indicating to your child that daily attendance at school is required teaches them to respect and value their education. Promptness shows your child that you value your child's work time.

If your child is sick and unable to attend school, we request that you notify us via PickUp Patrol by 9:00 am. If you arrive after 9:00 am, please bring your child to the office so their attendance can be recorded accurately. **Please try to have your child to school on time.** Valuable experiences are lost if your child is late for class.

The first six to eight weeks of school are very important times in which relationships are formed and a foundation for the year is set. Transitions into new classes can be difficult for children and parents. Each child transitions differently and this early time is essential to the child's feelings of confidence and comfort in the new environment. Absenteeism during the first weeks of school should be avoided as it can add to the transition challenges. Attendance during the last weeks of school is also optimal. Many important activities that are tied to the curriculum happen throughout the last month of school. Please check your school calendar when planning a family vacation and make your child's education a priority by scheduling vacations during our breaks.

Health

A productive school experience requires at minimum a level of physical and mental health that allows students to engage with the experiences offered by our program.

The Ithaca City School District provides us with school nurses. If there is a problem concerning a student's health, the parent/guardian is encouraged to contact the Health Office. The School Nurse will be glad to help in any way possible.

First aid is given to protect the life and comfort of students until authorized treatment is secured. Further treatment or diagnosis becomes the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Should a student become ill or injured at school, the parent/guardian will be called and they are responsible for seeing that the ill child gets home safely. All parents/guardians need to have a plan to pick up and care for sick children.

Do not send a sick child to school. If your child is not well enough to participate in recess, they should not come to school.

Children with minor illness will not be excluded from school unless:

- the child has a fever (oral temperature of 100 or greater); students must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.
- the illness prevents the child from participating in school activities.
- the child requires more care than the school staff can provide.

When your child is ill, it is helpful for you to report their diagnosis to the School Nurse. The Ithaca City School District has a policy that prohibits students from attending school with a communicable disease or condition. If you have a question about whether your child can be in school with a specific diagnosis, please contact the Health Office. In the event of serious illness or injury the School Nurse can help coordinate your child's educational needs and plan for a safe and successful re-entry into school.

Mental Health

There are times when a child's impaired mental health can significantly affect their ability to function successfully or safely as a student in our environment. EACMSI is not a therapeutic setting, therefore we may not have the resources to meet the needs of students during periods of mental illness. At such times, we work with families to determine if EACMSI is an appropriate placement or whether a leave of absence is best.

Medication

All medications given at school (prescription, non-prescription, homeopathic, etc.) require a licensed medical provider's order. Our school nurse will administer necessary medication to children during the school day. In order to do so safely, parents/caregivers requesting this service must provide the following:

- Completed medication form signed by a licensed health care provider

- Signed request by parent/caregiver requesting medication be administered as instructed by health care provider
- Medication must be in its original labeled container (must match information on medication order)
- Signature acknowledging date medication is received along with name, form and amount of medication
- Long term medications must be renewed annually
- The parent or guardian must bring the medication to school and give it directly to the nurse

Immunizations

NYS law requires physician verification of specific immunizations for legal entry into any NYS school. Current immunization guidelines are available from your local health care provider and our school nurses.

Exceptions to this requirement are as follows:

- A certificate signed by a physician licensed in NYS stating the specific reason or condition why immunizations(s) are detrimental to the child's health.
- Physician's certification that the child has had the disease or serological proof of immunity.
- A written statement signed by the child's parent/guardian that they hold religious beliefs contrary to the practice of immunization. The statement must describe the beliefs in sufficient detail to permit the school to determine that (a) the beliefs are religious in nature (not health or philosophical), and (b) the beliefs are sincerely and genuinely held.

Students who are exempt from immunizations will be excluded from school in the event of an outbreak of disease for which the student is not immunized.

Further Health information can be found at www.ithacacityschools.org under Health and Wellness.

Nutrition

We are a peanut free school.

Please read ingredient lists carefully. If a product has been processed where peanuts have been processed, we cannot have it at school.

Our Main Building is also tree nut free.

Please read ingredient lists carefully. **Please read labels carefully and note that even non-nut foods may be contaminated if processed in a plant where tree nut or peanut products were prepared.**

We encourage using whole grain products, and making low sugar and low fat choices for lunches, snacks and treats to share.

All children must bring a lunch and beverage to school. Please include any necessary utensils. Children will be required to bring home all lunch leftovers. We encourage parents to pack food in reusable containers.

Please try to include a high quality protein and a fresh fruit and veggie in each lunch. Candy, gum and soft drinks are not permitted.

Junior Level students supply their own snacks. Please pack extra food in your child's lunch box. They may eat snack during the school day.

Physical Education

Physical Education is an important part of our school program. When it is absolutely necessary, a child may be excused from 2 PE classes **upon the written request of a parent/guardian**. A written statement from the family health care provider is required for prolonged exclusion from PE. This should include the reason and, if possible, the length of time for exclusion. No student may return to PE after such exclusion until the School Nurse has received a return to PE order from the health care provider. Students who are excluded from PE may not participate in recess or other physical activity at EACMSI. **Sneakers only** are considered proper footwear for PE class.

Upon enrollment to EACMSI, students must submit proof of a physical examination done within the last 12 months by a licensed Physician, Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner in order to participate in PE.

Footwear & Labeling

Each child needs to have a pair of indoor shoes to wear in the classroom. These can be indoor sneakers also used for indoor physical education. In addition, children need outdoor shoes or boots for recess play and outdoor physical education sessions. Crocs, clogs and flip-flops or any open toe shoes are not permitted for recess or gym.

Please label lunch boxes, hats, mittens, sweaters, jackets, shoes, etc. with your child's name. This enables them to recognize their own things and assures that they get returned if misplaced.

Recess Wear

All temperature determinations take wind chill into account

Required Recess Clothing

Below 10 F:	Indoor recess
Over 10 F:	Outdoor recess for everyone

We recommend children wear face protection when sledding.

10 – 30 F:	Down or heavily lined coat, hat, waterproof gloves/mittens, snow pants, insulated boots
30 – 40 F:	Down or heavily lined coat, hat, gloves/mittens, snow pants (if sledding or sitting in snow), boots (if snowy or ground is wet)
40 – 50 F:	Coat, hat and gloves, boots (if conditions are wet - water, mud or snow), outdoor shoes for paved surfaces, gravel or stone
50 – 60 F:	For those who are involved in an active sport: Long-sleeved shirt or t-shirt with a windbreaker or light jacket For those who are not involved in an active sport: Coat, polar fleece, sweatshirt, or sweater with one layer All Students: boots (if snowy or ground is wet) or outdoor shoes for playing on paved surfaces, grass or stone

What does independence look like at school?

By the time a student joins the Junior Level, we expect they will...

- Be responsible for their own belongings (carry lunch box/backpack from car or bus and appropriately store in cubby)
- Enter school independently or say goodbye in the front hall before entering their classroom environment.
- Be able to change clothes and shoes of all seasons independently.
- Use respectful behavior as they move through the school (greet people you see, use please and thank you, use quiet voices and calm bodies - caregivers are great role models!)
- Eat respectfully with others and clean up after themselves when done.
- Manage their work and belongings in their cubbies and in the classroom, being mindful that our shared space is maintained for all by all.
- Have the ability to make choices throughout the day, with the guidance of their teachers.
- Work to solve problems, prior to asking for help.
- Listen to and follow directions.

School to Home Connections

Optimal development occurs when children are given chores in the home and held accountable for their completion. Duties should be those they can learn to manage successfully with guidance and support from adults. Once a task is mastered, children should complete their chores independently with minimal oversight from adults. Specific duties should become more substantial and complex as children mature.

Junior Level aged children can perform the following chores:

- Vacuum, dust and polish
- Water plants
- Sweep / wash the floor
- Load / unload dishwasher
- Wash dishes by hand
- Set /clear the table
- Make bed, clean room.
- Make a simple meal
- Make own lunch
- Rake leaves
- Feed pets
- Laundry- sort, wash, dry, fold, put away.
- Change sheets
- Clean tub / shower
- Compost
- Take out garbage

Homework

We begin the homework component of an EAC education during Junior Level. The rationale for including homework at this point is three-fold: first, to reinforce the acquisition of specific skills that are initiated in the classroom, (math facts and operations and the fundamental mechanics of writing), second, to give parents a window into their child's experience of school work, third, to establish a habit of doing work at home.

Reading each night is the most important component of Junior Level homework. The Junior Level years are essential for honing emergent reading skills into automaticity, ultimately allowing for more sophisticated text decoding and higher comprehension ability.

Ideally, parents and teachers work together to support the child in their homework. If your child does not regularly hand in homework, teachers will be in touch with you. In the same vein, if you see your child is struggling with homework, don't hesitate to contact their teachers. The ultimate goal is always to develop strategies that help children find success in their work.

Birthdays

The birthday tradition at the Junior Level often involves sharing of food from home (tree nut and peanut-free) in addition to the exciting "Walk Around the Sun". This is one of the few opportunities Junior Level students have to offer food to friends. Please refrain from making this special snack a sugary treat. Please make contact with classroom teachers to plan birthday celebrations.

Classroom Observation

Our school is organized into three Primary classes, including half-day, and full-day program and extended day programs, three Junior Level Classes, an Upper Level Program, and a Middle School program. Classroom observations occur weekly, beginning in mid-October through the beginning of May. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment to observe their children in action and any other programs of interest.

Conferences/Report Forms

Formal reporting for all levels consists of three progress reports, in November, February and June. Student progress reports will be available electronically prior to parent-teacher conferences. Junior Level parents will have two conferences, Fall and Spring. **Please reserve the dates as printed on our school calendar. Conferences will not be rescheduled.** Standardized testing is administered to all Junior Level students in the third year of the JL twice per year.

Technology

EACMSI is committed to educating children to be fully functioning citizens of the 21st century. We believe that just as the current technological revolution is transforming society as we know it, so too must the process of educating children be transformed. Doing so while holding true to Montessori principles requires great care and forethought.

For the 2017-2018 school year, the use of personal reading devices by EAC students from Primary through Middle School is restricted to those children for whom their use is sanctioned by either an IEP or an Individual Learning Plan. We will revisit our technology policy on a yearly basis.

Upper Level students have access to Chromebooks, desktop computers and Nexus Tablets. Before an EAC student may use a computer, both the parents and the student must sign and return the EAC Acceptable Use Policy, a document given directly to students at the beginning of the year.

For further insight regarding technology and curriculum at EACMSI please visit <http://eacmsi.org/programs/>

Toys/Games/Cell Phones

We request that children come to school without toys, electronics, games and cell phones. **“Dress up” clothing, costumes and accessories are not permitted at school.** We encourage children to bring objects of interest related to ongoing projects in the classroom. Weapons, play or real, are not permitted.

Families who choose to allow their children cell phones or electronic devices must instruct them that these are to remain in the child’s backpack, turned off, and may not be used while the child is at school. As we do not allow students to text or contact family during school hours (even when on field trips), please reinforce school rules and let your child's teacher know/speak with your child should this occur. “Smart” watches, like other electronic devices, must remain in the child’s backpack throughout the day.

Classroom Placement Policy

It is school policy that in those levels where there are multiple classes; siblings will be placed in different rooms.

Behavior Shaping Policy

The ground rules at EACMSI are simple and all encompassing:

- Respect yourself
- Respect others
- Respect the environment

The goal of EACMSI behavior shaping is to:

- Balance the freedom and responsibility of the individual with the need for cooperation, order, restraint, and goodwill within the group.
- Provide an environment where young people will experience encouragement, affirmation, and community, as well as expectations of personal responsibility.
- Ensure each student’s physical and psychological safety.

- Enable each student to develop a high standard of moral integrity through gradual growth in self-discipline and personal responsibility.
- Maintain a high standard for student behavior that reflects positively on self, family, and school.
- Nurture each student with loving firmness, respect, and fairness.
- Grow students into mature, responsible adults

In the event that a student fails to meet the expectations above, the following describes our usual approach and protocol when working with students as they develop and internalize self-discipline:

During the first 6 weeks of school all students are systematically taught how to meet expectations specific to their developmental stage and experience. During this time teachers teach, re-teach, re-direct and facilitate.

If, after this intensive instruction, students continue to deviate from desired behavior, we ask them to pause all activity until they are able to follow the directions being given. If misbehavior continues, the child is sent to the office. The child proposes a new solution with the support of an Administrator. The incident is recorded in our Behavior Record to impress upon the student the seriousness of the situation.

The next time the same misbehavior occurs, the child fills out a form which is brought home for parents to sign, and a meeting is scheduled with parents, teachers and Laura or Anne. If the child is involved in a further incident of the same nature, they call their parent or care-giver and must leave school for the remainder of the day. Child and adult together process the issue, look at solutions that have not worked and come up with a new solution that holds promise.

An 8:45 am meeting with Laura or Anne, the child, the child's teacher and the parent is called for the following day. During this “re-entry meeting”, the child describes the incident, explains why it was problematic, and articulates a plan to avoid making the same error going forward.

When a child has broken a rule during our After School program they are asked to correct the behavior. If unable to do so, or the behavior is recurrent, the student will be asked to miss a day of After School in order to work with parents on behavior shaping. If the problem persists, the child may be asked to leave the After School program.

The school expects parental cooperation in all aspects of their student’s life at EACMSI. All rules apply while on our campus either before, during or after school, and at all times on school outings.

Montessori Terminology

Dr. Maria Montessori introduced many new terms and concepts to describe how children grow and learn. Here are definitions of some widely used Montessori words and phrases.

Absorbent mind – From birth through approximately age 6, young children experience a period of intense mental activity that allows them to “absorb” learning from their environment without conscious effort, naturally and spontaneously.

Concrete to Abstract: The classrooms are filled with hands-on materials as Dr. Montessori believed that knowledge proceeds from the hand to the brain. Each material presents an abstract concept such as addition or scientific classification. As the student works with the concrete material, the abstract idea begins to form. The student no longer needs the material having internalized the concept and is now ready to proceed with abstract work.

Control of error – Montessori materials are designed so that children receive instant feedback as they work, allowing them to recognize, correct, and learn from their mistakes without adult assistance. Putting control of the activity in children’s hands strengthens their self-esteem and self-motivation as well as their learning.

Cosmic education – The body of work that is the curriculum for the elementary child is called the Cosmic Curriculum. This encompasses subject matter most typically taught as separate disciplines such as Geography, History, Geology, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, and Physics. The purpose of the Cosmic Curriculum is first to give the child a vision of the whole universe, and then to provide opportunities that allow them to discover how the universe works and their place in it.

Cycles of Activity: Work initiated by the child will naturally follow a cycle to its end, which is signified by the return of the material to its proper space. The teacher honors this natural completion by allowing the child to work uninterrupted. The basic concept behind the cycle of activity is that it allows the child to become absorbed in work and complete the task to satisfaction.

Grace and courtesy – 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.

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

Normalization – A natural or “normal” developmental process marked by a love of work or activity, concentration, self-discipline, and joy in accomplishment. Dr. Montessori observed that the normalization process is characteristic of human beings at any age.

Normalizing event – Within the prepared environment of the Montessori classroom, children experience a normalizing event every time they complete a basic work cycle, which includes 1) choosing an activity; 2) completing the activity and returning the materials to the proper place; and 3) experiencing a sense of satisfaction.

Planes of development – Four distinct periods of growth, development, and learning that build on each other as children and youth progress through them: ages 0 – 6 (the period of the “absorbent mind”); 6 – 12 (the period of reasoning and abstraction); 12 – 18 (when youth 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.

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. 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.

Socialization – The process by which the individual acquires the knowledge and dispositions that enable him to participate as an effective member of a social group and a given social order.

Work Cycle – Through years of observation from around the world, Dr. Montessori came to understand that children, when left in freedom, displayed a distinct work cycle which was so predictable it could even be graphed. In Montessori school children have open, uninterrupted time to choose independent work, become deeply engaged, and repeat works to their own satisfaction.

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.”