



MONTESSORI
SCHOOL *of* ITHACA

TEACH PEACE

Nurturing the hearts, minds, and spirit
of children since 1979.

Middle School
Handbook
2019 - 2020

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

Welcome to the 2019-2020 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	7
Arrival	7
Dismissal	7
Tuition and Fee Management	8
After School Care	8
Before School Care	9
Cancellation/Delays	9
Attendance	9
Health	10
Mental Health	11
Medication	11
Immunization	12
Safety	12
Nutrition	13
Physical Education	13
Footwear	14
Recess	14
Classroom Observations	15
Conference/Report Forms	15
Technology	15
Toys/Games/Cell Phones	15
Classroom Placement Policy	16
Restoring Justice	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.

At EACMSI we prepare children for the future we envision: an equitable, just, and peaceful world.

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 Lakshmi Bhojraj if the need arises at lr10@cornell.edu. 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

Email Policy

Classroom teachers are available via email. Please feel free to reach out to them directly if you have questions or concerns. Teachers will do their best to respond within a 24 hour period. If your query is more urgent, please contact the main office to facilitate a more timely response.

Our teachers go above and beyond in their dedication to their students. It is vital that their weekends and vacation days are sacrosanct. *School policy precludes teachers from responding to messages between 4 pm. on Fridays and 6 am. on Mondays.* If there is an emergency over the weekend, please contact Laura at lgottfried@eacmsi.org.

Please know that the Laura has asked to be copied on any correspondence regarding a student. In most cases, this will be a passing “cc” just to keep her informed about topics of interest to parents and teachers. In some cases, it is useful background or input to a topic that might require more attention. Please copy Laura on such correspondence, and expect to see a “cc” in a reply from a teacher, as Laura is included in all significant correspondence.

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

The EACMSI Middle School program combines rigorous academic offerings with rich hands-on experience on the EACMSI campus, in the greater Ithaca community, elsewhere in the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic US and ultimately, in Costa Rica.

The goal of our program is to assist the adolescent in awakening and defining their adult self through meaningful work amidst a community of learners. We guide young people on their journey toward becoming empowered, independent and contributing adults. The Adolescent Program is designed with the developmental characteristics and needs of the early adolescent as its foundation.

For more information on our Middle School curriculum visit:

<http://eacmsi.org/middle-school-program/>

Arrival

Parents may pull up to the front door of our Main Building to drop children off. 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.)

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 pm. Upon arrival, Middle School students are asked to wait in the Main Lobby for a teacher.

Dismissal for Middle School Students

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 Art (ABR center) parking area.

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.

Middle School students are dismissed between 3:10 pm and 3:30 pm from the main entrance. When you arrive, one of our staff will call your child. **Children who are not picked up by 3:45 pm will be sent to our Afterschool Program in our main building 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.

Tuition and Fee Management at EACMSI

EACMSI partners with FACTS Tuition Management for the processing and collection of school tuition and fees. We are using the FACTS Premier Integration system so that our families can see and manage all of their student information and school billing in one place: ParentsWeb. You can review your account history, change or add a payment method, print invoices, set up automatic payments or make an immediate payment from ParentsWeb. **Tuition payment plans are set during the registration/enrollment process and cannot be changed after the 31st of May preceding the academic year.**

You can make payments over the phone with the assistance of a FACTS Customer Service Representative. Live agents are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call toll free to make a payment at (866)441-4637. Payments made by phone or your ParentsWeb account are posted the same day they are received.

Payments are due on or before your payment due date. If payment is not received by the due date or there is an outstanding balance on your account, a \$40 late fee will apply. A fee of \$30 will be applied to your account for any failed payment processed via auto-debit, phone, web or paper check. Your bank may also impose additional fees.

If you have questions or concerns about your tuition payment plan, please contact Lisa Smith or Whitney Wiggins.

After School Program

Our After School program is an engaging and fun program available to students at EACMSI. 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.**

The After-School program for Middle School students is a combination of downtime activities and a homework club. During the first hour, from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm, students have free-time

to play outside and have a snack. During the second hour, students fulfill homework requirements or read quietly.

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.

During all - staff professional development meetings, we do NOT offer After School care, for the 2019/20 year these dates are 10/22/19, 1/28/20 and 3/31/20.

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 FACTS. Each child's readiness and individual needs are taken into consideration for acceptance in Before School Care. 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 FACTS.

During faculty/staff safety drills we do not offer Before School care. For the 2019/20 school year, this date is 12/10/19.

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.

Please check your school calendar when planning a family vacation and make your child's education a priority by scheduling vacations during our breaks. Students who miss days for

vacation and/or family events, may miss important lessons and other programmatic activities. **If planning an extensive vacation, please be aware that students may not be able to make up lessons missed or receive homework while away.** Even with the best of intentions, it is nearly impossible for children to attend to schoolwork when visiting with family and friends. Teachers will determine which work must be completed and how it is expected to be done.

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 a school nurse. 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 functioning as a student in our environment.

While the underlying cause(s) of mental health concerns are relevant to treatment and the journey towards wellness, it is the behavioral manifestations of the distress, rather than the root cause, which determine the viability of school attendance.

Behaviors of concern include but are not limited to, high levels of personal distress, acts of aggression/violence towards self or others, destruction of school property, non-compliance, disruption to the regular delivery of curricula, other behaviors that threaten or compromise the well-being of the classroom community, and/or chronic school absence.

During these periods students may need extra support, increased supervision, or an alternate space to decompress. Depending on the age, placement and specific concerns regarding the student in question, these accommodations may not be possible at EACMSI.

Should a student require the comprehensive services available in a therapeutic setting, EACMSI is no longer an appropriate placement; we lack the resources to meet the needs of students during such times.

Since our Upper Level and Middle School programs are highly experiential and collaborative, students must be able to engage with and access the curriculum. Likewise, the experiential nature of these programs makes recreating them at home with a tutor and textbook challenging. Students on leave may miss significant curriculum and require additional time to complete their studies.

The EACMSI Administrative Team, in conjunction with classroom teachers, will determine on a case by case basis, if EACMSI continues to be an appropriate placement or if a leave of absence is warranted.

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 nurse.

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 (medical exemption).
- Medical exemptions must be renewed annually.
- Physician's certification that the child has had the disease or serological proof of immunity.
- 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.
- Religious exemptions are no longer accepted in New York State.

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

Safety

In accordance with NYS regulations, our school has an all-encompassing safety plan that is reviewed annually and updated yearly. We continually monitor and evaluate best practices to strengthen our plan.

The plan addresses evacuation and lockdown for all of our buildings. Our students, faculty and staff participate in evacuation drills. Our faculty and staff participate in lockdown drills without

students. Students are given developmentally appropriate lessons designed specifically for them to be able to follow instructions during a lockdown experience.

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. Please pack food in reusable containers. Candy, gum and soft drinks are not permitted at school.

Middle School students supply their own snacks. Please have your child pack extra food in their lunch box.

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

Independence at school for a Middle School Student

To foster the development of self-reliance, students are expected to:

- continue the work of learning to organize and manage their time and work – including understanding the components of what is necessary to complete both short and long term assignments.

- organize their belongings to be prepared for meeting daily requirements (including monitoring of the weather to be prepared with appropriate outerwear.)
- develop a plan for completing missing and/or past due work.
- communicate concerns about work and/or social/emotional issues to a teacher.
- balance school expectations with extra-curricular activities.

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. Parent/teacher/student conferences occur in Fall and Spring. **Please reserve the conference dates as printed on our school calendar. Conferences will not be rescheduled.**

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.

The use of personal reading devices by EACMSI 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. Middle School students have access to Chromebooks, desktop computers, Nexus Tablets and digital science equipment. Before an EACMSI student may use a computer, both the parents and the student must sign and return the EACMSI 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. 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.*

Overnight Field Trips

Students must be in good academic standing to be eligible for travel. For students with special dietary needs, parents may be required to provide supplemental food to complement meals.

Classroom Placement Policy

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

Restoring Justice...

Footsteps towards becoming a moral member of the human race...

Our Middle School program is a practice ground for young people who are about to launch into the wider world. We want them to experience the workings of a mindful and just society and to carry forth the moral precepts that allow true collaboration and social cohesion to manifest. We hope to instill a framework for addressing issues of justice. “What is the just thing to do here? How do we address the needs of this community in light of the common good? How do we do so with honesty, integrity and engagement in the problem-solving process? How do we find empathy and understanding in the midst of this issue?”*

In other words, the EACMSI Middle School is a practice ground for grappling with social norms, rules of respectful conduct and consequences for misconduct. When students of this age cross social, moral, or institutional boundaries it is an important moment and the School will act diligently on behalf of any victims *and on behalf of the future of the transgressor.*

Middle School students are expected to adhere to the EACMSI code of conduct on- and off-campus: **Respect yourself; respect others; respect the environment.**

The following will be considered major infractions:

- Academic dishonesty

- Harassment - persistent and unwelcome statements or threats that are verbal, written or physical
- Intimidation -provoking fear in another
- Sexual harassment -repeated unwelcome sexual advances and/or any other inappropriate verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature
- All forms of sexual activity
- Any form of weaponry at school

The School considers each case of major misconduct individually, with a clear sense of the particular circumstances surrounding the event. The determination of consequences is made by the Administration in consultation with Middle School faculty.

Consequences for major infractions range from suspension to expulsion.

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.

*Pat Ludick, *Formative Education: Foundations for Character Development*, NAMTA Journal Summer 2011

Middle School Travel: Safety Protocol

Teachers will contact parents if/when their student becomes ill, or has been significantly hurt, harmed or distressed.

Students will be asked to leave a school trip if/when they have committed a major infraction. Under such circumstances, parents will be asked to retrieve their student.

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.”