

*“One test of the correctness
of educational procedure
is the happiness of the
child.”*

— Maria Montessori

2009-2010

Lagunitas Public Montessori Parent Handbook



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The child has one intuitive aim: self-development. He desperately wants to develop his resources, his ability to cope with a strange, complex world. He wants to do and see and learn for himself, through his senses and not through the eyes of an adult. The child who accomplishes this moves in harmony with his world. He becomes a full person. He is educated.

- Dr. Maria Montessori

PREFACE

WELCOME TO THE LAGUNITAS SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Lagunitas School District is composed of two campuses, San Geronimo Valley School (the upper campus) and Lagunitas School (the lower campus.) The district offers parents a unique opportunity to choose between three progressive educational programs for elementary-aged children. The Open Classroom (kindergarten through grade six) and the Waldorf Inspired (kindergarten through grade four) operating from the San Geronimo Valley School campus; and the Public Montessori Program (kindergarten through grade five) from the Lagunitas School campus. Students from all three programs may continue their education at the middle school (sixth through eight) at the Lagunitas School campus.

The elementary programs and the middle school program interact and influence each other. The District Governing Board is responsible to the community at large and meets regularly at the Lagunitas School campus. Meetings are generally open to the public and an agenda notice is posted via email.

The district employs an administrative staff for the combined four programs: a superintendent, a principal, and a business manager. Together the superintendent and principal represent school staff concerns to the District Governing Board. The school principal is available for conference appointments and encourages parents to freely communicate ideas and concerns.

This handbook was designed to familiarize families with the structure, responsibilities, and philosophy of the Montessori Program. Should you have further questions, please feel free to contact any member of the Montessori staff or Steering Committee (see appendix for information).

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The Montessori Program, situated on the Lagunitas School campus, spans grade levels kindergarten through fifth with the potential for developing a sixth grade. The program derives its philosophical base from the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, and is committed to her educational precepts and practices. Montessori believed that learning is an exciting process of discovery, leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline and a love of learning and peace.

The actual curriculum reflects a fusion of the teachings and materials supported by Montessori and the educational requirements delineated in the California State Frameworks. Through the cultural subjects of—history, geography, and the sciences—students are encouraged to see themselves as the citizens of the world, and they learn to recognize the interrelationships of all living things. It is our goal that children develop a lifelong sense of responsibility for themselves and for the earth.



Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952) was an Italian physician, educator, philosopher, and humanitarian

MONTESSORI PROGRAM HISTORY

Convinced that the Montessori method of education suited their children, a group of parents committed themselves to the task of creating a public Montessori program within the Lagunitas School District. Thus, in November of 1981, Marin Parents for a Public Montessori (MPPM) was founded in San Geronimo. By the fall of 1982, this dedicated group realized their dream. After surmounting the political and financial obstacles inherent in implementing such a program, MPPM proudly opened the doors of Marin County's first public Montessori kindergarten through grade two classrooms at the San Geronimo Campus. The growing needs of the program required the yearly creation of a new classroom—furnished, financed, and staffed—and parents and staff successfully met these challenges.

Parents and staff, throughout the program's history, embodied the principles at the foundation of the Montessori philosophy. These principles of community, cooperation, respect, responsibility, and individual as well as group effort have been responsible for the existence and growth of the program. Making education an adventure has contributed greatly to the Montessori program's success.



STAFF

All teachers hold a California teaching credential and, pursuant to Lagunitas School District Board policy, certification as a Montessori instructor. Teachers without Montessori certification upon hire are encouraged and financially supported by MPPM to attain the necessary certification. This issue is still under debate. In the classroom a part-time teacher's aid and parent volunteers support each teacher. District resource specialists provide consultation and additional instruction for children with special needs in reading, math, and language. Teacher education and staff and curriculum development are ongoing processes. Staff participation in workshops, in-service training, and continuing education courses enhances the curriculum and keeps teachers in touch with current developments in education, and enables integration of newer approaches into the Montessori sequence.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The Montessori classroom is a very active place where children learn through experience. Two fundamental aspects are observed—the child-centered-environment and the effort to maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio achieved through the employ of teachers' aides and volunteering parents. The teacher (often referred to as a director/directress) establishes and prepares the environment and presents lessons. Beginning in the earliest years, students are gradually expected to manage their own time in light of the work to be done. Thus they learn to focus their attention on the on a wide variety of project-based activities that allow for the application of knowledge and skills to real world situations. Activities provide purpose, procedure, closure and opportunity for success.

This sort of curriculum is designed to promote independence, a love of learning, and increasing levels of responsibility for planning work time. To address the needs of the whole child, the curriculum also specifically nurtures cognitive, physical, social-emotional, spiritual, and psychological development. The overall goal is that children experience the joy of self-development and mastery and that they perceive themselves as the source of their own learning and growth.

Teachers

Our program's teachers embody the core beliefs of Montessori philosophy, such as respect for the individual learner, preparation of the environment, fostering independence, order and concentration in the student, respect for and recognition of sensitive periods and planes of develop-



ment, recognizing intrinsic motivation of the student, and the absorbent mind. Teachers encourage students' spontaneous intellectual activity, support self-teaching occurrences, provide opportunities for community building and leadership appropriate to each level, and give clear and meaningful individual and small group lessons.

Multi-age Grouping

Integral to the Montessori Philosophy is the implementation of multi-age classroom groupings. The rationale is that leading, sharing, and modeling peers in a developmental range offers a maximum opportunity for interactive learning. It allows the child to accelerate, review past lessons as needed and reinforce concepts at progressively abstract levels. The Montessori curriculum coupled with wide age groupings challenges each student to excel.

A pure Montessori configuration would place children from three to six years of age together, those from six to nine together, and those from nine to twelve together. These groupings (based on child development research) are not always possible in our small public school setting. The program strives to maintain class configurations to include two or three grade levels in which children spend those years in the same class. Parents are allowed to present a group document offering their feedback on the proposed class configurations for the following year.

Physical Environment

The Program's classrooms are equipped with as full as possible range of Montessori materials to support the curriculum. Materials are easily accessible to students and are displayed in an aesthetically pleasing manner. The Program regularly inspects and evaluates materials for completeness and good working condition and keeps an inventory of instructional materials and furnishings. Key features in the Montessori classrooms are



Montessori students counting in groups of 10's during 100's day.

cleanliness and order, logical organization of materials, appropriately sized furnishings, areas allowing for varying activities (individual/group, floor/table, noisy/quiet, and active/sedentary), and a provision for the display of students' work.

Independence

Development is the result of an individual's own work and experience. As Montessori stated, "My vision ... is ... of individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher, by means of their own activity through their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual." The Montessori program respects and encourages the child's ability to work independently, taking care not to pamper, patronizes, or overprotect. Children are assigned real responsibilities and they are expected within reason to act for themselves. Nurturing of the child is directed toward increasing independence and self-sufficiency. Large blocks of uninterrupted instructional time support focused student learning. The Program schedules enrichment activities and transitions as often as possible to accommodate these blocks.

Respect

Adults in the classroom treat students with respect and expect them to speak and behave with the same regard to all adults and children in the school. Independent thinking is valued and students are encouraged to express their ideas clearly and respectfully. A sense of respect is extended to the use of material objects in the classroom and the campus facility at large.

Class Meetings

In addition to the morning circle that begins each day, class meetings are held on a regular or as needed basis. The students often set the agenda, and either a teacher or a student leads the discussion. In this setting, topics such as class projects, playground issues, and future plans are discussed.

Punctuality

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children arrive at school on time. So that they may feel part of the group and oriented for the day's activities, it is essential that all students be present at the beginning of class. Interruptions by late children take time and energy from the rest of the class as well as the teacher. Parents should hold any morning social conversations with other parents in the parking lot away from classrooms and walkways.

Conflict Resolution Skills

Learning to resolve conflicts through discussion is a key skill for personal growth and development. When difficulties arise between students they are encouraged to discuss the issue and to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution. Often this process is facilitated by a teacher and reflects the Montessori philosophy of a harmonious coexistence based on mutual respect.

Field Trips

The curriculum of study for the elementary-aged child is the world. Whenever possible the world is brought into the classroom. Yet, the interests of the elementary period naturally extend beyond the classroom walls. Students are offered opportunities to explore the community, environment, and other settings outside the classroom. Parents attend field trips as volunteer drivers and chaperones—this is essential to the success of each trip. Some example of 4th-5th grade field trips include:

- Malikoff Diggins California History – 2 days/overnight field trip
- Marin Headlands YMCA – 2 days/overnight field trip
- Environmental living Miwok field trip.

Montessori Field Trip HIGHLIGHTS

Spring Equinox Divide Meadows

4th-5th Grade Malikoff Diggins
California Living History 2 night trip

Exploratorium

Academy of Sciences

De Young Museum

Angel Island California History Trip

Point Bonito YMCA Environmental 2
night field trip

Heart's Desire End of Year Field Trip

Petaluma Bird Sanctuary Field Trip

STRAW Creek Restoration

Montessori Tamarancho Campout

SECTION 2

THE HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

INTRODUCTION



Montessori 2nd Grade Friends

No educational institution can perform its task nor realize its aims unless it is firmly supported by the parents of the children it serves. For better understanding we suggest using our resource reading materials available through our Montessori Resource materials housed at the county library on the Lagunitas School Campus. By becoming aware of the Montessori philosophy, parents provide a complementary home environment. Ideally, the home and the school reinforce each other.

Montessori education is an approach to human development wherein the school experience is only one aspect of the child's development. Teachers, parents, and all other adults in the child's life, work together to structure varied environments for the child's total development.

PARENT EDUCATION

There are many opportunities throughout the year for interaction between parent and teacher to learn about the school environment. Parents are responsible for attending all classroom meetings including: Fall Back to School Night, Spring Open House, and biannual (fall and spring) scheduled parent-teacher conferences.

Parent education workshops focusing on Montessori philosophy and techniques are held periodically throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to attend regularly to enhance their knowledge of the benefits of a Montessori education. Eventually, sessions will be videotaped and available for parents to borrow from the Montessori Resource Library collection housed at the San Geronimo Valley Library. There are also plans for the formation of a book club covering educational topics of interest to both parents and faculty.

COMMUNICATION

Tuesday Packet/Tuesday News

Every Tuesday your child will receive a "Tuesday Packet," an envelope containing important classroom and school information—e.g., teacher's weekly update letter, field trip permission slips, volunteer requests, and

a “Tuesday News” calendar that chronicles upcoming school events. The “Tuesday News” is also transmitted via email to parents by the office staff. Parents are responsible for reading all communications sent home and for keeping abreast of information made available to them. Make it your child’s job to deliver these notes to you. Return any notes requiring signatures inside the Tuesday packet envelope to your classroom’s teacher.

Teacher/Administration to Parent

An important aspect of our program is open, honest dialogue between parents and teachers/administration. Teachers are happy to discuss any concerns you may have. If you would like a conference, let the teacher know so she or he can arrange a meeting as soon as possible. We encourage you to take any comments, suggestions, or criticisms directly to your child’s teacher.

Because the classroom is a busy place in the morning, it is best to call the school office or leave a note requesting a meeting with the teacher. If, after talking to your child’s teacher, you wish to have further communication, please contact the elementary school principal.

Emergency Phone Tree

At the beginning of the school year each class organizes and distributes an emergency phone tree that, when activated, efficiently conveys vital information to all families in a class. The phone tree operates in this fashion:

- A parent volunteer telephones two parents, always the same two parents.
- These two each call two more parents, always the same people.
- These four, in turn, each call approximately five numbers, which completes the class list.

Using this system, no individual parent is responsible for calling an entire class. By always calling the same people, continuity is maintained and a rapport between families develops. Use of the phone tree is usually restricted to critical and emergency situations. A class contact list and school directory are distributed early in the school year for personal communication between students’ families.

Email

Notices from the school and community are available via email. Parents are offered the opportunity and are highly encouraged to sign up for email alerts at the beginning of every school year. Contact the Program’s email coordinator for more information.

FINANCES

Funding for our Public Montessori is from a patchwork of sources, each with their own income streams and tributaries. We depend on money from the District, LEAP-the fundraising foundation of the LSD, and the fundraising efforts of Marin Parents for Public Montessori (MPPM).

- The Lagunitas School District pays for a certified teaching staff, facilities overhead and maintenance, administration and management, among other district-wide programs. This money is from state, county and federal sources as well as a district-voter-approved Parcel Tax, designated for Enrichment and Class-size Reduction. (Read: Art, Music, Gardening & Nutrition, Physical Education, and Teacher's Aides, among other educational opportunities.) Please support this Parcel Tax, as it goes a long way to pay for all these "extras".
- LEAP is the fundraising foundation of the Lagunitas School District and raises money for all four programs in the District. LEAP consistently helps to narrow the gap between government tax-based funding and what the four programs actually spend to provide our unique educational opportunities. Most allocations are based on the number of students enrolled in each program. LEAP also administers the Parent Pledge program that is an essential part of our Montessori budget. Each family is asked to contribute at least \$360 per student per year, which is fully tax deductible and can be paid in full, in 2 installments, or through smaller automatic monthly payments.
- Marin Parents for Public Montessori (MPPM) is ultimately responsible for the costs associated with our Art, Music, Gardening and Nutrition, Outdoor education, Instructional Aides, Physical Ed, Field Trips and other enrichment programs, as well as our specialized learning environment. We raise money for our program's expanded enrichment opportunities and Montessori manipulatives and materials in a variety of ways. Each is an opportunity to engage in a very meaningful way with our Montessori community while supporting our children and teachers.
- The Scrip program provides money for our group from participating merchants who donate a percentage of the money you spend at their store or on their services to MPPM. There are Scrip programs available at specific stores (Good Earth and United) where you contribute by showing a card at point of purchase, and many other businesses participate in Escrip which allows you to contribute by using registered credit cards at participating merchants or by opening an Escrip credit card that can be used anywhere credit cards are accepted. This is a great way to contribute to the program with no additional cost to you, but you must sign up and keep your information and cards current. A Scrip coordinator is available to help parents participate in this program.



- We have two major fundraisers during the school year. Montessori fundraisers are fun, family-friendly events that raise money for our program while promoting community and connection. The Fall Festival Fundraiser features seasonal activities, games, music, food and a raffle, and accounts for 50% of the total proceeds raised throughout the year. We also host a Bingo Night in the spring featuring a baked potato bar and homemade soups and chilies followed by spirited rounds of Bingo with prizes for all ages and blackout rounds for major prizes, and dessert. The number of fundraisers is currently under review.
- Other fundraising projects include Montessori merchandise, such as T-shirts and sweatshirts, and the student Penny Drive that the teachers use as a great hands-on math lesson for the students, as well as a successful fundraiser. The Fundraising Committee works on ideas and execution for these and other fundraisers.
- Funds are reserved for and allocated to teachers and aides engaging in continuing education conferences and courses to enhance the quality of our school's Montessori curriculum and environment. Policy is under feasibility review.

The Montessori Treasurer manages the finances, reports to the parent group and works with the District Business Manager to keep budgets current. The Budget Committee is responsible for making each year's budget, which is approved by the parent group.

Everyone works together to provide the unique and wonderful education that our children receive in the Lagunitas Public Montessori.



STEERING PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Montessori Program has its own Program Steering Committee, which is formed of parents and a teachers' liaison "to oversee and administer all aspects of the Montessori Program such that the greatest opportunity for growth, learning, and self-esteem is provided for all those involved." The Steering Committee participates in financial matters; hiring; communications with the District Board and the PTA, the parent group; committee organization; fund-raising; planning; evaluation; print and web collateral, policymaking; maintaining connections to other school programs; troubleshooting; social events; and celebrations. To make responsible decisions that reflects a broad base of opinions, the Steering Committee gathers information from various parent and teacher-staffed groups. Steering Committee meetings are held monthly or upon special notice and all parents are always welcome to attend. The Steering Committee is a vital, moving force behind the program. We encourage you to contribute your time and ideas by attending meetings or becoming a member of the Steering Committee. This is an excellent way for working parents to participate in the program.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) consists of parents and teachers working together to provide enrichment experiences and opportunities for our children. This group helps make things happen by organizing fundraising and allocating those raised funds to selected projects. By joining the PTA and attending monthly meetings, parents make a tangible contribution to the quality of our program.

The meetings are a good place to ask questions, get acquainted with other parents, and volunteer for a project. At a typical meeting, a teacher representative informs the group of recent and upcoming student projects and the staff's needs. Sub-committee heads report on the status of his or her group's ongoing projects. Parents discuss pressing program issues or offer up ideas for improvement. Expenditures are discussed then voted upon. Information regarding upcoming events and programs is conveyed. Volunteers are often recruited for upcoming fundraisers and projects.

SUB-COMMITTEES

All committees (e.g., curriculum, finance, communications and fundraising) are formed through the PTA and Steering Committee. Each of these committees is chaired by a Steering Committee or active PTA member who seeks participants from the parent body and staff according to interest, ability, consistency, and commitment. Committee work is a great way to

get involved, make friends, and have fun while contributing to your child's education.

PARENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Since the quality of our program is strengthened by the involvement of its members, families are encouraged to volunteer at least one hour per week to the program. This requirement can be satisfied in a variety of ways:

- Direct involvement in the classroom, garden, or on field trips
- Construction of classroom instructional materials
- Serving on the Steering or other task committees
- Helping with fund-raising
- Docent Program (pending development)

Each classroom has a parent volunteer coordinator who communicates regularly with the teacher to assess current classroom needs, solicit and coordinate all parent participation accordingly, and maintain a sign-up schedule. This coordinator is selected at the beginning of each school year. Let your child's teacher know if you would like to assume this vital role.

There are many other ways in which you can contribute your time. Please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher or a parent-volunteer coordinator.

SECTION III

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

STUDENT EVALUATION PROCEDURE

Parent Teacher Conferences/Student Progress Reports

Twice a year, in fall and spring, your child's teacher will schedule a parent-teacher conference to discuss your child's academic and social progress. In addition to a verbal assessment, you will receive a written progress report evaluating your child's strengths and challenges. Viewed year to year, these written assessments provide a consistent tool for teachers and parents to monitor a child's progress from K-5th grades (see appendix for a sample of the Student Progress Report document).

PARENT FEEDBACK

The Lagunitas Montessori Program supports an open dialogue of best practices among parents, teachers and administration. Parents may address their concerns and personal assessments of the program to the administration directly or during formal parent meetings. Joining the Steering Committee also provides parents with an excellent forum to discuss and assess the reigning philosophical and pedagogical practices within the program.

SECTION IV

UNDERSTANDING MONTESSORI EDUCATION

It is not enough for the teacher to restrict herself to loving and understanding the child; she must first love and understand the universe.

BIOGRAPHY OF MARIA MONTESSORI

Maria Montessori was the first female doctor to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School. This was in 1896 when children who could not succeed in the traditional school system were ostracized from school and placed in institutions where they were labeled by society as “mentally deficient.” Dr. Montessori, being a true pioneer, recognized the capabilities of these children; she discovered through the invention of manipulative materials, that the children were able to learn to read and write. She became devoted to the goal of using her sensorial materials with all children, and this became her lifelong work in education.

In 1907, Dr. Montessori established a daycare center, Casa dei Bambini, in a slum tenement in Rome. There, where she could test her equipment and methods on a general population, she was amazed by the way the children concentrated on some of the exercises. The materials appealed to the children so much that they would repeat an exercise with a particular apparatus many times and would seem to be content and happy when finished.

One day she forgot to lock the cabinet in which the materials were kept and the next day the children, having arrived before their directress, were found to be happily working on the materials of their choice. This “accident” led to the basic Montessori practice of having all the materials on low open shelves, readily visible and available for individual choice of activity. Some of the materials were ignored so she removed them. To her surprise, the toys she had placed in the environment were also neglected

so she eventually removed them, too. Over a period of time, new materials were developed and tested.

Montessori believed that these sensorial materials appealed to an innate desire that children have for learning. She was to state years later that, “Because the child under six learns chiefly through the senses, this equipment is ingeniously conceived to improve (the child’s) perceptions in touch, smell, sight, sound and balance. Early training of the senses leads to more active perception of reality and roots imagination and intelligence in reality.”

It is interesting to note that the widely accepted work of the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, closely parallels Montessori’s. Perhaps this is because he also used observation of children to develop his theories. In 1942, Piaget wrote, “Sensory-motor intelligence lies at the source of thought, and continues to affect it throughout life.”

Other surprising things happened in that first Casa dei Bambini. The children were found to be indifferent to rewards or punishments related to their work. They were proud of their work and demonstrated a great deal of personal dignity. They had a sense of community and concern for each other. The most striking thing that was observed, however, was the self-discipline, concentration, and spontaneity of the children. This impressed the frequent visitors.

Montessori had not planned to introduce reading and writing to children so young (under six) but was persuaded by their illiterate parents. She gave the four and five year olds sandpaper letters to trace with their fingers. They were fascinated with these. They eventually learned the sounds for them and spontaneously started to write words and then sentences. They would read their own written words but were not interested in other words. It took about six months for them to start reading words around them, such as street signs and billboards. After that they discovered books.

This behavior was new to Montessori and significant for three reasons: one, the children spontaneously taught themselves; two, the usual process of reading and then writing was reversed; and three, the children involved were only four and five years old. She went on to test these observations and refine her equipment in other schools she established in Italy and to extend her method for elementary. Visitors from all over the world came to see these “remarkable children” and Maria Montessori started traveling widely to lecture and establish schools and teacher-training centers.

In 1912, Montessori made her first visit to the United States: She was enthusiastically received by prominent scientists and intellectuals and was even received at the White House. She returned in 1915 to teach a training course in California, at which time she helped to set up a Montessori



Maria Montessori (1870–1952)



Maria Montessori



Maria Montessori with students

classroom at the World's Fair in San Francisco. She was given much attention in the press and many articles on her method appeared in magazines. Montessori schools were established in many cities around the country.

The educational establishment at that time was not so enthusiastic however. Professor William Kilpatrick of Columbia University wrote a book called *The Montessori System Examined* which is given credit for successfully deflating the Montessori movement in this country. By 1918 the flame of Montessori education in the United States had flickered and died, and was not to be rekindled for over forty years.

Montessori continued her research in education in Europe and India. Before her death in 1952, she had formulated her ideas on secondary education—the “Erdkinder” or farm school project. It was during this later period that Montessori focused her attention on our human responsibility for the stewardship of the earth and the continued evolution of life on the planet. In the 1960s, Montessori's educational theories and method again received support in the United States, progressing from the early childhood emphasis in the '60s to experiments in elementary education in the '70s and attempts at secondary education in the '80s.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The Montessori approach to education encompasses more than an educational method. This approach reflects the integration of a philosophy of life, a psychology of human development, an educational technique, and a distinct body of educational materials and curriculum. Two phrases, also

titles of works by Montessori—"the discovery of the child" and "education for peace"—exemplify the primary strands of Montessori's philosophical base.

Discovery of the Child

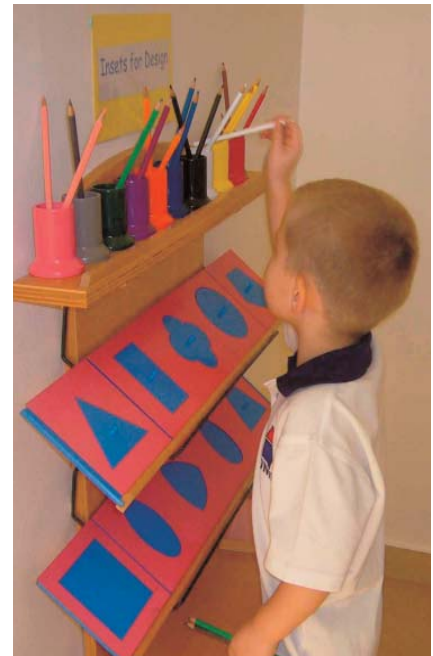
The discovery of the child refers to Montessori's appreciation, shared by many educators, of the particular needs and sensitivities associated with each developmental stage of human life. Montessori studied the child and through careful observation and experimentation outlined appropriate structures and activities to support children in their development through these stages. Drawing from this research, she formulated an educational method that would work in harmony with the child's natural tendencies. Because prevailing educational approaches did not consider the natural characteristics of children be a basis for their formal education, Montessori described her work as "the discovery of the child." Her observation that children actually preferred "real-life" directed work to frivolous playthings was a new insight about childhood.

The Curriculum: Education for Peace

"Education for peace," as a central tenet of Montessori's educational philosophy, can best be understood through a description of the curriculum she designed to nurture our human responsibility for planet earth and the life it sustains. Montessori combines the cultural studies and is an integration of study in the various disciplines of science and social science—zoology, botany, history, and cultural and physical geography. Montessori designed this curriculum to appeal to the heightened imagination and curiosity of the elementary-aged child, to provide a perspective of the magnificence and mysteries, interdependence and unity of life on the planet.

In this course of study, the elementary-aged child experiences the accumulated knowledge of humankind the sciences and mythologies-and begins to understand how that knowledge was collected: It is through a global, universal approach that each aspect of our world is presented to the child. For instance, in geography, the child does not begin by studying the familiar—his or her home and neighborhood. The study of geography begins with the cosmic whole—the universe and our planet on which each neighborhood is only one of many. This global approach is echoed in all the areas of study. It is a child of the universe we're educating, one who is able to look beyond boundaries to realize the interconnectedness of all life.

The study of history begins with our origin, that primeval explosion that shot the universe out in all directions. Our planet earth is studied from its historical and universal perspective—the unique planet in our solar system that had the appropriate elemental composition necessary for life to originate and evolve. As they study the evolution of life and its interdependence





with the earth's development, children can begin to understand the precarious balance life faces. Evolution is studied as a cosmic process, each species being a cosmic agent that in its own selfish struggle for survival, completes its responsibility to the whole. The mollusk needs calcium to build its shell and by eating up calcium from the seas, it purifies the water for other species to evolve.

As the children study the "Peoples of the world's" from the perspective that all people have the same basic needs of life, they realize that differences among us come from the various ways we satisfy those needs, which ultimately depend on the resources available to us. Children study the legacy of knowledge that humans living before us have developed and that we receive as a birthright—a number system, a language, and the natural and social sciences. We are helping them to respect the work of those who lived before us, and to feel their responsibility for contributing to this accumulation of knowledge. The continual integration between the various disciplines and animals are studied not only from a biological point of view but also from a geological and geographical point of reference. Mathematics and language are studied as systems that serve human society and are understood to have a history and a future. The curriculum is sequenced; earlier experience provides the basis for later understanding. For the child to internalize the sophisticated concepts, he or she must work with them in concrete form over a long period of time. Based on the sensorial and attitudinal foundation of the pre-elementary years, the Montessori curriculum continues to build over the six years of elementary education. The Montessori elementary curriculum is more than the subjects studied. As the concrete expression of the philosophical and developmental values from which Montessori worked, the curriculum is most importantly a style of learning.

The Montessori curriculum is:

- A relationship between the teacher and student. The child's independence and self-discipline are nurtured, allowing the child, as much as possible, to direct his or her own learning;
- The relationship between and among the students, the formal and informal leaning from each other and from each other's work;
- The "prepared environment," an environment ordered with materials that allow students, not only to be active in their learning, but to direct their own work; and
- A personal relationship to work.

REFERENCES

Parents are encouraged to develop their own understanding of Montessori principles and philosophy by making use of materials available from the Montessori Resource Library housed in the school library on the Lagunitas Campus. Various publications from the North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA) and other sources are available on a checkout basis. Also available in the Resource Library is information about the Lagunitas School Montessori Program.

Montessori Resource Library

NAMTA - David Kahn, editor, *Implementing Montessori Education in the Public Sector* (1990).

Maria Montessori

The Child in the Family

Spontaneous Activity in Education

Reconstruction in Education

Childhood Education

Dr. Montessori's own Handbook

The Montessori Elementary Material

From Childhood to Adolescence

The Montessori Method

By Others

E.M. Standing, *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work*.

E.M. Standing, *The Montessori Revolution in Education*.

Lesley Briton, *Montessori Play and Learn*.

Elizabeth Hainstock, *Teaching Montessori in the Home (for preschool)*.

Mario Montessori, *What About Free Expression*.

Readings

Teal Green Binder: Readings on Discipline

Kelly Green Binder: Readings on the Planes of Development

Black Binder: Readings on the Spiritual Basis of Montessori

Pink Binder: Education as Peace

Dark Blue: Binder Miscellaneous Readings

Periodicals

Public Montessorian (pending order)

SECTION V

DETAILED CURRICULUM GUIDE

This guide was prepared to give parents, teachers, and administrators an understanding of the curriculum offered to students in the 'Public Montessori 'Program. Some subjects lend themselves easily to large group instruction and others are taught in small groups. The cultural subjects are taught to the whole class although small groups or individuals might work on specific projects. Math and reading are usually taught in small groups. Other subjects such as creative writing, geometry, and spelling are sometimes presented as class lessons and sometimes In small group settings.

CURRICULUM FOR HUMAN VALUES

Both the state of California and Maria Montessori recognizes the need for schools to develop and reinforce in children good work habits. Teamwork. Perseverance. Honesty, self-reliance, and consideration for others. The character of the child is influenced by the many messages she receives from the adults around her. and the school is responsible for helping the child to reach the highest standards of human behavior and interaction.

Today's world imposes many pressures on young children. and there are many influences in our society from which we try to shield our children. More than ever before, schools and families need to support one another in the common goal of helping students reach their full potential not only as learners. but also as self-reliant, caring human beings.

Integral to the Montessori curriculum outlined in this Guide is the understanding that the teaching staff and the families in the Program are involved in a partnership in which respect for all people is honored and values of honesty, acceptance, independence, and consideration are fostered.

THE CULTURAL SUBJECTS

In Montessori education botany, zoology, history and geography are referred to as the Cultural Subjects, and they are the backbone of the curriculum. It is our goal to weave the four subject areas together as much as

possible so children understand and appreciate the connections of each area of study on the others.

Each autumn all classes in the program study North America. We follow a four-year cycle in grades K-3: United States, California, Mexico/Central America, and Canada. In grades 4-5 we follow a two-year cycle: United States, California. In the spring all classes study the same continent in the following yearly cycle: Europe, Africa, Antarctica, South America, Asia/Middle East, and Australia.

Zoology and botany are included as part of the ecosystem of a particular continent. In addition, we study animal classification throughout the grades. The youngest children study the vertebrates, second and third graders typically learn about invertebrates, and the older children review these classifications as well as study animal adaptation and/or endangered species. Trees and flowering plants are presented individually as well as being included in continent studies. We make every effort to teach the interrelationship of geography, history, botany, and zoology.

The studies of the continents also include a deeper look at the area's culture; art, music, literature, dance, and theater are integrated, and cross-grade activities are included. The physical characteristics of any land greatly influence the development of its culture, and students look at the ways in which people all over the world meet their basic needs. In fact, the "Needs of People" is an important concept in Montessori education. Dr. Montessori pointed out that people everywhere have the same material and spiritual needs which they fulfill according to their particular environment and traditions.

In the fall, we study the "Origins of the Earth" using a timeline and "the Clock of Eras." At the Halloween Celebration the students demonstrate their acquired knowledge of time by accurately accessing the historical period of their costume choice and placing themselves on the timeline.

LANGUAGE ARTS OVERVIEW

Included in the language arts curriculum are spelling, grammar, handwriting, the writing process, and the development of verbal language.



Cultural Subjects Sequence: 2009-2016

| YEAR | K-3 FALL | 4-5 FALL | SPRING |
|---------|----------------------|------------|------------------|
| 2009-10 | United States | California | Antarctica |
| 2010-11 | Canada | USA | South America |
| 2011-12 | Mexico/Central Am | USA | South America |
| 2012-13 | United States | California | Asia/Middle East |
| 2013-14 | Canada | USA | Australia |
| 2014-15 | California | California | Europe |
| 2015-16 | Mexico/Central Amer. | USA | Africa |

Reading will be addressed separately despite the fact that it is integrated into all the subjects in this section. Our goal is to give children experience and practice with the skills they will need to be proficient readers and writers. We also strive to enhance their natural love of language.

SPELLING

Our goal in spelling is that children use correct spelling in their written work and that they demonstrate an understanding of phonetic rules and patterns.

GRAMMAR

We follow the Montessori curriculum, which includes presentations that teach the parts of speech, grammar usage, punctuation, sentence analysis, and mechanics of language (prefixes, suffixes, etc.)

HANDWRITING

Our handwriting instruction leads the student from learning to print to writing in cursive.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Through a variety of activities, children use the written word to express their ideas and to communicate results of their research. Prewriting, editing, and evaluating their own writing and that of their peers is part of this process in grades 2 through 5.

VERBAL LANGUAGE

Group discussions, sharing, oral reports, drama, readers' theater, class meetings, and many other activities contribute to the child's facility with verbal language.

LANGUAGE ARTS – WRITING*

KINDERGARTEN

- journal writing- dictated to an adult- later. Inventive “Best guess” and phonetic spelling
- letter recognition
- letter-sound association
- initial sound discrimination
- manuscript printing, upper and lower case
- listening skills- rhyming, etc.

FIRST GRADE

- Journal writing- dictation Journals continue through all grades)
- “Best guess” spelling
- Noun family (article, adjective, noun)
- Vocabulary enrichment (continues through all grades)
- Writing and speaking in complete sentences with standard grammar phonics
- Beginning story and poetry writing
- Introduce spelling patterns and sight words

SECOND GRADE

- Writing in original complete sentences with correct spelling and grammar
- Correct usage of capital, period, question mark
- Writing a letter using correct format
- Poetry
- Verb
- Subject and predicate
- Dictionary skills

THIRD GRADE

- Introduction to paragraphs

Montessori Language Arts Manipulatives

Grammar symbols and Boxes

Pictures in a basket

Language Mystery Boxes

Star of the Week

Pen Pals

L.A. Journals

Grammar Boxes

Grammar Symbols

Sentence Analysis Charts & Boxes

Story writing – noun study, themes, plot, setting, characters

Printed Alphabet

Grammar Box and symbols

Handwriting

Journal

Sentence Analysis Charts and Boxes

Grammar boxes and symbols

Moveable Alphabet

Word Labels

- Introduction to summarizing
- Preposition
- Cursive introduction
- Putting written information in your own words
- Dictionary skills

FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADES

- Report writing
- Summarizing information
- Adverb, conjunction, pronoun, interjection
- Correct use of paragraphs
- Editing symbols
- Correct use of comma, quotation marks, semicolon
- Author's chair
- Exposure to techniques and styles of poetry
- Similes, metaphors
- Encyclopedia and computer as resources



LANGUAGE ARTS- READING

Reading is, of course, an integral part of all subject areas, and it is taught both as a subject in its own right and in context in the cultural subjects and language arts. In the early years, phonics and whole language approaches are both used to give the child the decoding tools and the literary appreciation that are essential to the enjoyment of reading. Skills will be listed at the grade level at which they are introduced, but children do not all learn to read at the same pace, so introduction of skills may vary with individual children. Once skills are introduced, they are reinforced in subsequent grades, although they will not be listed again in this sequence.

KINDERGARTEN

- letter names
- sound and letter association
- word building with the movable alphabet
- beginning readers (ie: Bob books, Modern Curriculum Press)
- phonemic awareness
- listening to stories read aloud

FIRST GRADE

- review all kindergarten skills
- reading for comprehension
- reading with expression
- phonetic patterns (silent e, digraphs, blends, long and short vowel sounds)
- vocabulary development
- oral reading experience
- silent reading
- sight words

SECOND AND THIRD GRADES

- review all skills previously introduced
- dialogue
- root words, suffixes, prefixes
- recognizing character development
- identifying with characters
- introduction to cause and effect
- reading for information-research
- oral and written summarization of stories

Montessori 4TH-5TH Grade HIGHLIGHTS

5th Grade Autobiography
Spaghetti Bridge Building
Fall and Spring Equinox plays
Monthly Student Newsletters
California Mission Projects
SGV Topography map project
4th Grade Continent Report
Biography of a Hero
Toys for Joys Sale and Cafe
Historical Halloween Time lines
Book report with visual aide diagram
Poetry Book
Story Book

- independent reading
- reading for pleasure
- writing about what you read
- discuss values in literature
- reading groups
- literary reading books
- dictionary skills

FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADES

- reading groups use literary readers and novels
- exploration of themes in literature
- analyzing what you read
- etymology of words
- sequencing events in a story
- group discussions of novels
- research skills- using the encyclopedia, Internet, resource books
- summarizing in your own words



MATH - GENERAL

The Montessori math curriculum relies on the manipulative materials invented by Dr. Maria Montessori. They spark the child's interest and bring a sense of concreteness to a subject that can be quite abstract. New concepts are introduced with a presentation of the appropriate material, and children work with the material until they are ready to move to the abstract level. Teachers supplement the math curriculum with California state texts, workbooks, and materials from a wide variety of publishers. Story problems and math investigations integrate reading, writing, teamwork, and critical thinking skills and are an essential part of the math program.

The math sequence presented here will show the grade level at which concepts are introduced. Once introduced, skills are reinforced and expanded upon in subsequent grades.

KINDERGARTEN

- counting to 100
- writing numerals 1-9
- 1-to-1 correspondence
- patterns
- odd and even numbers
- graphing
- estimating
- calendar
- geometric solid shapes
- names of coins- penny, nickel, dime
- time (hour)
- addition facts to 10

FIRST GRADE

- greater than, less than
- skip counting, squares, and cubes of numbers
- place value (unit, tens, hundreds, thousands)
- mathematical vocabulary (addition, subtraction, equal)
- story problems
- time (hour and half hour)
- fractions (1/10, 1/9, 1/8 etc.)
- addition and subtraction with units and tens

Montessori Math Manipulatives

Addition Strip Board
Stamp Game
Shake Game
Subtraction Strip Board
Multiplication Bead Board
Bead Cabinet
Golden Bead Material
Division Board
Colored Bead Bars
Algebraic Peg Board
Geometric Hierarchical material
Number Symbol Cards
Small Bead Frame
Large Bead Frame
Flat Bead Frame
Checkerboard
Bank Game
Division Board
Test tubes & Skittles and beads
Base 10 Blocks
Fraction Circles
Geometric Cabinet
Geometry sticks
Geometric Cards
Geometric Solids
Constructive Triangles
Montessori Protractor



- value of coins- penny, nickel, dime, quarter

SECOND GRADE

- carrying and borrowing to the tens place
- relating a fraction to a whole number (ie: $\frac{1}{2}$ of 8)
- telling time (quarter hour and minutes)
- manipulations with money
- memorization of addition and subtraction facts to 20
- linear measurement (inches, centimeters)
- liquid measurement
- introduction to multiplication as repeated addition
- bar graphs.
- Investigations



THIRD GRADE

- carrying and borrowing to the thousands place
- borrowing across zero
- adding 3 or 4 multiple digit numbers (ie: $243 + 1774 + 79$)
- beginning multiplication
- introduction to memorization of multiplication tables
- beginning division
- introduction to decimals (related to fractions and money)
- adding and subtracting money
- linear measurement (feet. yards)

FOURTH GRADE

- division with single digit divisor
- division with a double digit divisor
- multiplication by one digit .
- multiplication by 2 digits
- equivalence of fractions and decimals
- measuring in fractions of inches, feet, meters
- fractions- equivalent quantities, reducing to lowest terms, addition and addition
- and subtraction of like and unlike fractions
- decimals- addition, subtraction

- estimation, rounding off, averaging
- graphing- pie, line

FIFTH GRADE

- decimals- to 1000ths place- addition, subtraction, multiplication
- fractions- all operations, mixed numbers
- ratio
- percent
- rules of divisibility
- prime numbers
- factoring numbers



MATH - GEOMETRY

Maria Montessori's geometry curriculum is designed to teach the child the relationships of plane and solid figures to math, architecture, and everyday life and to lead the child to an understanding of the use of geometric principles. Through geometry the child can recognize the symmetry of a flower as well as calculate the degrees in an angle. We try to relate the study of geometry to art, botany, and other curricular areas and to make it relevant to the real world. The curriculum is shown in two-year increments, and many activities introduced in the early years are revisited later on.

KINDERGARTEN- FIRST GRADE

- Children learn the names of polygons. They construct shapes. They are introduced to geometry through activities with the following Montessori materials:
- geometric solid shapes
- constructive triangles
- geoboards
- pink tower
- metal insets
- binomial and trinomial cubes
- geometry cabinet polygons
- exposure to different types of triangles

SECOND-THIRD GRADE

- learn geometric concepts- point, line, surface, solid
- identify types of triangles- equilateral, isosceles, scalene
- construct 2 and 3 dimensional figures
- learn types of lines- parallel, convergent, divergent
- introduce area and perimeter

FOURTH-FIFTH GRADE

- learn types of angles- right, acute, obtuse
- identify triangles by sides and angles (ie., acute scalene triangle).
- symmetry
- scale
- equivalence. congruence
- measure angles using protractor

- construct 3 dimensional figures
- area, perimeter, volume
- angles – types of, measurement with protractor

SPECIALIST PROGRAMS

Teachers with special training in these subjects are funded by the Parcel Tax which is a valuable supplement to the District's operating budget,

ART

The importance of art in children's education has been and continues to be a high priority for the parent group and the staff, Projects are often integrated with the areas of study in the cultural subjects, Children spend one hour a week in the art room with a professional artist. In addition, they do artistic projects in their classrooms with the classroom teachers,

MUSIC

The music program offers children the opportunity to play rhythms and melodies using Orff instruments. The Orff approach is designed to release the whole of the child's musical promise, utilizes chants, rhymes, songs, games, dance, and percussion instruments to engage the child. During music class the students also compose and perform their original compositions. Above all else, the music program offers the children the joy of making music.

SPANISH

Rosetta Stone Spanish Software is now being implemented into the upper grades. A parent volunteer docent program is also in the works to supplement Spanish learning within the classroom.

WILDERNESS WAY

Wilderness Way is part of the Montessori enrichment program and provides activities for grade levels K - 5. These are hands on projects that help children understand how Native people lived and what we can learn today from the harmonious way they coexisted with nature.





GARDENING /NUTRITION

As stated on the San Geronimo Valley Community Center's website:

The Community Center has facilitated the preservation and development of wonder and respect for the world and its interconnected nature by providing environmental, agricultural, and nutrition education within the Lagunitas School District.

In addition to our active role in the school we also provide the same programs and experiences in our after school programs and community events. We provide family cooking nights to the community, as well as in our after school programs, cooking demonstrations at events and special holiday nutrition packets with our annual holiday food baskets. Our nutritional education programs are featured in the Food Pantry as well.

The Community Center has supported a school garden coordinator, a community nutrition coordinator, educational trainings, special community events, and materials for the garden and nutrition programs.

We are proud to say that we are able to serve over 300 students with our garden and nutrition programs. In addition we provide nutrition information and education opportunities for 500+ individuals in the community through our food bank and community nutrition programs.

This year through our facilitation of the Nutrition Advisory Council we have been able to generate new organic lunch choices and assist in the writing of the School Wellness Policy.

PROGRAM RITUALS, CELEBRATIONS, AND ACTIVITIES

Classroom celebrations, rituals, and activity policies are based on the philosophical and developmental principles of the Montessori curriculum. Philosophically, the cultural studies provide the framework for these rituals. Developmentally, the individual child and community are strengthened through these student-directed experiences of cooperation. Some of our seasonal celebrations include the Autumnal Equinox, Historical Halloween, and Spring Equinox.

Each teacher and classroom creates its own ritual to celebrate birthdays. Plans should be discussed in advance with your child's teacher. We discourage handing out party invitations at school unless the whole class is invited.

PROGRAM CELEBRATION CALENDAR: 2009

August

- Welcome to Montessori Potluck – This is a potluck at Samuel P. Taylor Park to welcome new students and their families to the Montessori Program. Everybody welcome!

September

- Autumn equinox- All classes give presentations to the program, and then we spend the day at Heart's Desire Beach.

October

- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- October 31st – District-wide Halloween Carnival –
- Montessori Historical Halloween- On the day of the Halloween carnival, students take their place on the historical time line made by the oldest group. Each child is introduced to the audience and takes his/her place on the time line.

November

- Veterans' Day Observed – No School
- Thanksgiving celebrations vary from year to year. Sometimes study buddies get together, Hunger Banquets have been observed by the oldest students, and sometimes single classes or various groupings share some food prepared by the class.
- Thanksgiving Recess – No School

PROGRAM CELEBRATIONS cont.

December

- Reindeer Races – Students race by grade level in the morning. Parents come along to cheer them on and prizes are given to all children
- Winter Solstice – Each class prepares a solstice presentation to share with the other classes.
- Toys for Joys Fundraiser- Scott's 4th & 5th Grade class gathers and sells used toys as a way to earn money for Toys for Joys Charity. Other classes purchase toys.
- Winter Recess – no school

January

- MLK Day – no school
- Parent – Teacher Conferences (All programs)
- Staff Development Day – Countywide - no school
- Kindergarten & New Student Info night (for potential parents to learn more about the Lagunitas School programs)

February

- 100 day – Students bring in a collection of 100 objects to count and share.
- February Valentines Day – each child brings in Valentines
- Mid-Winter Recess
- Bingo Night – fundraiser for Montessori.

PROGRAM CELEBRATIONS cont.

March

- Staff Development Day; no school for students.
- March Scholastic Book Fair – The multi-purpose room is filled with books and games which the children and look through and purchase. Another great fund raiser for the whole school.
- Spring Equinox – Each class gives a presentation in the Montessori Amphitheater. After the presentation there is a field trip to Divide Meadow in Point Reyes.
- School read-a-thon – Fundraiser for kids to take home a form and get sponsored. This helps encourage reading.

April

- Spring Recess
- Parent/Teacher Conferences Open Classroom so Shortened days for all
- PTA Program Meeting focusing on classroom configurations

May

- Valley Visions - This is THE major fundraiser for the school district and is held at Dickson Ranch
- Open House/Spring Sing
- Memorial Day Holiday – no school

May cont.

- 4th & 5th Grade class – Outdoor Education Trip alternates each year between:
- Environmental Overnight trip to the Marin Headlands/YMCA Camp.
- Gold Country Trip- As a part of the fourth/fifth grade California study, the older students participate in an overnight trip to Malakoff Diggins where they relive the California Gold Rush days.

June

- Montessori All Program Continent Celebration Day. Much of our curriculum and many activities revolve around the continent studies which are explained in the Montessori Curriculum Guide.
- Montessori All program trip to Heart's Desire Beach.
- Last Student Day: Breakfast potluck and 11:00 a.m. Montessori 5th Grade Graduation
- Kindergarten Graduation - Dismissal at noon.



CONTACT INFORMATION

The Montessori parent group would like to welcome your family to our wonderful Montessori program and the Lagunitas School District. If you have questions before your child starts school feel free to call or email your parent buddy below:

Other important info:

Montessori Secretary: Linda Craig: 488-9437 email: lcraig@marin.k12.ca.us

Montessori and Lagunitas school Email list: If you are not receiving emails with the subject starting with [Montessori] then please contact Nicki Tostevin to make sure you are on the Montessori Program email list.: 488-1068 nicole@redheadart.com

Montessori web site <http://www.lagunitasmontessori.org/> Please visit our site for an overview of the program and what to expect in the coming year.

Zoila's Aftercare: 488-9344 (K – 2nd Grade after School care in Community Center)

Community Youth Center's Valley Kid's Club – (After School care for 2nd -5th Graders) Julie Young - 488-0688 email: valleykidsclub@sgvcc.org web site: <http://www.sgvcc.org/children%20programming/afterschool/vk.html>

San Geronimo Valley Community Center - 488-8888 (After School classes start the 2nd week of Sept. 9/8-9/10 Patrick Byrd: email: admin@sgvcc.org web site: <http://www.sgvcc.org/index.html>

School Readiness for children 0-5 - School Readiness Program – Events, Resources, Classes for Families with Children Ages 0-5 years old. Alex Cusick: 488-8888 #209 or email: qsix@comcast.net

San Geronimo Valley Playgroup –Thursdays 10 a.m. Room 9 – Heather Richardson & Jennifer Breen Justice: 488-8888 ext. #209 or email heatherrichardson@comcast.net or jjjusticeca@hotmail.com

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