

Parent/Student Handbook

2019-2020

Woodrow Wilson Montessori School

A Montessori Magnet School

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Parent Pledge

We are happy you have chosen to join our learning community. Our goal is to give your child the best Montessori education possible. You are an essential part of the student-parent-teacher partnership that is critical to your child's continued success in Montessori. To make the most of this partnership we ask that you do the following; I pledge to:

- 1.) Support my child's education at home by: setting a time and place for practice and reading, free of distraction; taking an active interest in my child's practice, projects, and assignments; ensuring that my child attends school (unless ill) and arrives on time and prepared; encouraging my child's positive attitude toward learning. Each child should read or be read to nightly for at least 20 minutes.
- 2.) Read the weekly Paw Print and all information in the Thursday Communication Folder to expand my own knowledge of the Montessori method and philosophy and keep abreast of upcoming events.
- 3.) Attend Open House and as many Parent Education Nights as possible, scheduled on weekday evenings throughout the year, to expand my own knowledge of the Montessori method and philosophy.
- 4.) Attend at least one family event per semester hosted by the school or PTO. Examples are: Parent U at Wilson, Wilson Family Camping Trip, Pancakes and Pajamas, College and Career Night, Family Fitness Night, etc.
- 5.) Observe my child's class during the school day at least once per year to complete a formal Montessori Program Classroom Observation.
- 6.) Participate in a parent-teacher conference at least once per year understanding that more may be requested by teacher, student or parent.
- 7.) Learn about my student's progress and help them to reach their goals by attending the Student Led Conference in the Fall and Students as Teachers in the Spring.
- 8.) Assist in at least one fundraising event for the Montessori program. Examples are: assist with the annual gala, help with grant writing, help with the Election Day bake sale, or provide matching corporate donations or private donations for Start with a Bang, etc.
- 9.) Participate in volunteer events in the school. Examples are: work at the PTO Fall Festival or Garden Works Day, join the PTO board, become a VIPS (volunteer), make materials, read with students, serve as room parent, accompany field trips, help office staff, etc.
- 10.) Communicate concerns to my child's teacher.

We look forward to a strong partnership with you in the pursuit of a quality educational experience for your child.

Thank you,

The Woodrow Wilson Montessori Educational Team

I understand it is part of my responsibility as a Woodrow Wilson Montessori parent to fulfill the above obligations. Furthermore, I understand that a minimum of 10 events (approximately 20 hours) is expected for each family over the course of the school year.

Student Name

Teacher Name

Parent Signature

Date

Please return to your child's classroom teacher by Thursday, September 5, 2019.

Message from the Principal

Dear Wilson Montessori School Families,

Thank you for choosing Woodrow Wilson Montessori School, where we educate children to be independent. We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with you in your child's Montessori education. We at Wilson Montessori School are dedicated to ensuring that your child receives the highest quality education. At the same time, the Montessori method will build a foundation for a lifetime of learning. It fosters skills of independence, self-confidence, and leadership in each student.

To fulfill our mission of being a truly exceptional school, we as a community must work together. A strong bond between the home and school is essential for student success. Therefore, it is vital that you become as involved as possible in the school community so your child can thrive at school.

When issues arise, your child's classroom teacher is your first partner in discussing and finding a solution. However, I reserve time each week for parent meetings. These can be to share concerns, highlight success or discuss how we can better support your child. To schedule a meeting, contact the school secretary and she will reserve a date and time for your family to meet with me.

I truly believe that by working together we will achieve our common goals and help your child reach his/her fullest potential so that he/she is able to fulfill his/her cosmic task.

Once again, on behalf of the school, I would like to welcome you and your family!

Wishing you well,



Shameika Sykes-Salvador

History of Woodrow Wilson Montessori School

Woodrow Wilson Montessori School, originally named Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, was built in 1924 on the site of the home of Republic of Texas president Mirabeau B. Lamar. In 1925, Wilson opened and became the showplace school of the city for many years. Among the school's most famous alumni are journalist Walter Cronkite and former Texas Governor, Mark White.

In 2003, Friends of Montessori proposed that HISD open an all-Montessori campus. By 2005, FOM and Houston ISD had entered into a partnership, designating Woodrow Wilson Elementary as the location for the new public school Montessori program. The school began transitioning to Montessori instruction in the fall of 2005, gradually expanding the program. The first HISD Montessori middle school community opened in the fall of 2008 with 7th grade. This year will mark our 15th year as a full Montessori campus.

Since 2011, Wilson Montessori has been a site for the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD) which was instituted by the Texas Education Agency to provide quality services to students in Texas who are deaf or hearing impaired. Eligible students are in a general education classroom with accommodations, which may include an interpreter, FM systems, etc.

Application, Admission, and Enrollment

Wilson Montessori School is a neighborhood school as well as a magnet school. Any student zoned within HISD may apply to the specialized Montessori program by completing a magnet application. Woodrow Wilson Montessori follows the HISD Magnet timeline for application deadlines, lottery selection and notifications, as designated by the Office of School Choice.

Documents required for enrollment include the student's last report card (grades 1-7), birth certificate, immunization record, two proofs of address (utility bills such as water, sewer, gas or electricity), parent ID, and student social security number (optional).

Refer to <http://www.houstonisd.org/magnet> for details about timelines and necessary forms.

Attendance, Arrival & Dismissal

ATTENDANCE

Daily attendance and punctuality are extremely important to support the classroom community, to teach the value of these behaviors, and to ensure adequate funding for the program. All HISD schools receive district funding based in part on attendance. It is each parent's duty to require his or her school-aged children to attend school, monitor the students' attendance, and request a conference with school officials to discuss any attendance concerns.

HISD ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be present and on time each day. If a student needs to be absent due to an illness or another unforeseen incident, the reason for the excused absence must be stated in writing and signed by the parent/guardian. **The written excuse must be received within 3 days after the absence, otherwise it is considered unexcused.** The student will be given 3 days to make up all missed class work. The attendance clerk may investigate any absence.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

The only acceptable excuses for tardiness and absences are:

- Personal illness
- Sickness or death in the immediate family
- Quarantine; example: head lice
- Severe weather conditions making travel dangerous
- Emergencies or unusual circumstances recognized by the principal or designee
- Participation in school activities with permission from the principal
- or any other cause acceptable to principal

In HISD, missing more than 10 percent (**or 17 days**) of school a year can lead to a student not receiving a grade or being retained, but more importantly, it represents lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn. Although a student has passing grades, he/she can still be retained due to attendance issues and can be required to attend summer school.

State law provides that if a student is absent from school without parental consent for any portion of the school day, for three days in a four-week period or for ten or more days in a six-month period, a notification will be sent.

STUDENTS WITH PERFECT ATTENDANCE

In keeping with the philosophy of Montessori education, we minimize extrinsic rewards however we do recognize the achievement of on-going goals and celebrate perfect attendance on a regular basis. Perfect attendance will be recognized monthly. Students with perfect attendance receive a Free Dress Bracelet for the month to be worn when desired.

Perfect attendance at the end of each grading period is recognized by a group photo by class of the perfect attendance students. Students must have zero absences and 3 or less tardies to be eligible for grading period perfect attendance.

At the end of the school year, students will receive acknowledgement for perfect attendance as well. To qualify for perfect attendance, students need to come to school every day. Excused absences also count against perfect attendance.

TARDIES

School officials understand that occasionally traffic, weather, or unforeseen events may cause a student to be late. However, persistent tardiness will not be tolerated. According to the **Student Code of Conduct**, being tardy is a Level I violation (please refer to the Student Code of Conduct). Level III violation is any repeated Level I violation. Violation of the tardy policy has the same consequences as a Level III violation.

When students are tardy, they miss important instructional time. This can cause them to fall behind or not meet grade level expectations. It's in the best interest that all students be on time each day.

ARRIVAL

Staff is on duty beginning at 8:00 a.m., teachers at 8:15 a.m. There is no supervision of students prior to 8:00 a.m., so students may not arrive on campus before 8:00 a.m. Parents/guardians will be notified when their child arrives before 8:00 a.m.

During the first days of school, parents can walk students to classrooms. After the first week of school, the following procedures will be followed to encourage independence:

Early Childhood (pre-K – Kinder): Early childhood students may enter the building through the Yupon entrance or the Windsor entrance beginning at 8:00 a.m. Once inside the building, designated staff members will walk students to the cafeteria to meet their teachers for breakfast.

Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School (grades 1–8): Between 8:00 and 8:20, students report to the track. At 8:20 students are released to their classrooms. Students who arrive between 8:20 and 8:30 may report directly to their classrooms.

After 8:30, all students (PK-8) must enter by the main entrance on Yupon and must obtain a tardy slip. **Parents must escort students to the front office when tardy. In the unlikely event you arrive late for carpool lane, you must drive around to park your car on Yupon and walk your child into the front office.** Do NOT leave your child at the curb or drive away. This puts your child in danger.

The doors from the circle drive (Indiana Street) and car pool lane (Windsor Street) will be locked at 8:30 am.

ENTRANCE LOCATIONS

Students may enter the school through two locations only: the carpool lane on Windsor Street and the main entrance on Yupon Street. Any student who can enter/exit the vehicle without assistance can be dropped off in

the carpool lane for arrival.

DISMISSAL

Dismissal time for all students is 3:50 p.m. To prepare for dismissal and protect the safety of all students during dismissal, parents must pick up prior to 3:15 p.m. Plan accordingly for doctor appointments and other early pick-ups. Parents arriving early but after 3:15 p.m. will be invited to wait for their children at their assigned dismissal area.

At dismissal time, all teachers will escort students to their assigned dismissal area.

Early Childhood classes will assemble on the Yupon side of the building behind the playground fence. Parents/guardians must park and walk to this area to sign out children.

Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary and Middle School classes (grades 1-8):

1. Car riders will dismiss by assigned carpool number from the classroom to the Carpool Line. Carpool tags are REQUIRED, and parents must register to renew carpool tags annually. For the safety of all students, expired tags will not be accepted.
2. Siblings of Early Childhood students may join their younger sibling and follow Early Childhood dismissal guidelines as outlined above if all teachers have been notified IN WRITING by the parents.
3. Walkers will be released from the main entrance of Yupon Street if the teacher has been notified IN WRITING by the parents. Students must leave campus and may not loiter.
4. Bus riders will dismiss to the bus lane (Indiana St.) every day, unless teachers have been adequately notified of alternative dismissal arrangements IN WRITING by the parents.
5. Little Heroes before and after-school program students will dismiss to designated locations in the building and will be picked up by Little Heroes group leaders. Parents must park and enter the building from Windsor for drop off and pick up.
6. All tutorial or after-school clubs will dismiss at their designated time from the main entrance on Yupon Street. Parking is allowed on Yupon Street after 4:30 p.m. Parents must pick up their students on time to ensure continued enrollment in the tutorial or club.

If it is raining at dismissal time, Early Childhood children must be picked up in their classrooms by their parents or guardians. All other students will be dismissed as usual unless weather conditions are extreme.

LATE PICK UPS

Make arrangements to pick up your child(ren) on time. School officials understand that occasionally traffic, weather, or unforeseen events may cause a parent to be late. However, persistent late pick-ups will not be tolerated. School ends at 3:50 p.m. **Parents are considered late after 4:00 p.m.** The procedure for persistent late pick-ups is below:

- After a 3rd late pick up, a parent conference with school officials will be required.
- After a 5th late pick up, students will participate in the drop-in program through Little Heroes, our afterschool program. If children are not picked up on time, parent will be called and student must be checked out from Little Heroes. **The cost for the drop-in program is \$20 per day; payable to Little Heroes.**

EARLY PICK UP & CHANGE OF DISMISSAL METHOD

Children are expected to attend school for the entire day. If a student needs to leave during the school day for an appointment or due to illness, he/she must be signed out by his/her legal guardian. The parent must come into the office to sign the child out from school.

If you have planned a play date for your child, you must notify the school **in writing** of who you authorize to pick-up your child. Only the parent who has completed the enrollment form or who is indicated on the birth certificate will be allowed to take a child from school during regular school hours.

A government issued form of identification is required at time of check out. **No student will be allowed to leave with an adult whose name is not on the enrollment card or birth certificate.**

The classroom teacher should receive a note the day prior if there is a different plan related to dismissal. Teachers are not able to check text messages, answer the phone or check emails during the school day as they are busy with instruction. In unforeseen situations, you must call the school **prior to 1:00 pm** to allow office staff time to get messages to teachers prior to dismissal.

SAFETY EXPECTATIONS

Expectations for Drivers:

- Areas around the school are cell phone free zones. Stay off the phone and watch for children.
- Be patient and observant. Children sometimes forget that driveways and streets are for cars.
- Children must always cross the street with the crossing guard.
- Follow the speed limit guidelines in a school zone. No appointment or deadline is more important than a child's safety.
- Drop off and pick-up children in approved areas only.
- Abide by the seatbelt and car seat laws for the passengers in your vehicle.
- Observe all parking signs and traffic cone placement around the school and in the neighborhood.
- Keep driveways and sidewalks clear on all the surrounding streets. Remember that you are parking in front of our neighbors' homes. Be considerate.

Expectations for Walkers:

- Watch for cars – they can't always see you!
- Cross the street only where the crossing guards are on duty.
- Respect neighborhood property. Be a good neighbor.
- Walk on sidewalks. Where there are no sidewalks, stay on the shoulder away from traffic.
- Do not talk to strangers – do not accept rides with strangers.
- Stay away from animals you do not know.
- Always follow the planned, direct route to your destination.
- Place trash in trash cans.
- Parents should know the route the child takes to/from school each day.

Expectations for Bicycle Riders:

- City ordinance requires that all students wear a helmet.
- One person may ride a bicycle at a time unless a child seat is attached.
- You are responsible for your bicycle. Do not lend it out or allow others to ride your bike.
- Walk your bicycle on school property. You become a walker when you enter school grounds in order to ensure the safety of everyone around you.
- Park and lock your bicycle in the bike rack.
- Always follow the planned, direct route to your destination.
- Parents should know the route the child takes to/from school each day.

School-to-Home Communication

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

As part of the Thursday Communication Folder, all students get the weekly school newsletter, “The Paw Print”. The “Paw Print” will contain calendar updates as well as important information related to upcoming events, Montessori parent tips, PTO news, etc. Parents should attend to the weekly newsletter.

LIVING TREE

Beginning this year, Wilson will be using a platform called Living Tree. Living Tree provides a private, secure collaboration network for school-to-home communication. It is a desktop and mobile app that is easy to install and even easier to use. Parents will receive calendar updates, text messages, be able to sign up to volunteer, and even see pictures or other media that a teacher posts. Parents will get directions for use in the Thursday Communication Folder during the first weeks of school.

THURSDAY COMMUNICATION FOLDERS

Every Thursday, each student is sent home with a folder in which parents will find important information. Parents should read through these carefully and return the folder with any documents that are requested the following day or as soon as possible.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Calendars are a part of the weekly newsletter sent home each Thursday with students. A current listing of scheduled events, school-wide testing, daily lunch menus, and more will be provided weekly. Parents will also receive a calendar of tentative dates and events at the beginning of the school year.

HANDOUTS

Periodically, handouts are sent home on days other than Thursday. Read these carefully and return them as soon as possible if requested to do so.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND EMERGENCIES

Periodically, there will be automated phone messages from the school giving important updates and reminders.

In the event of school closure, for bad weather or emergency, you will receive an automated phone message providing details of the closure. You may also check the HISD web site or call the Inclement Weather Hotline at 713-267-1704. Local television and radio stations are also good resources in such situations.

Field Trips

Teachers are responsible for planning appropriate field trips for all students. All students must have an HISD permission slip signed by a parent or guardian for each field trip. Unsigned permission slips will prevent students from attending.

Classroom teachers may choose to invite parents to assist during scheduled field lessons. Parents who chaperone are not allowed to bring other children. Parents riding the school bus must adhere to the bus regulations and obey directives from the bus driver and the teachers on the bus. After the field trip, if you wish to sign your student out, you must do so in the school office.

Parents must be VIPS approved to attend. If a parent/guardian/caregiver would like to volunteer for or chaperone a field trip, he or she must sign up for the VIPS program, see section “Parent Participation: Volunteering” for more information. The processing time for the VIPS program can take up to three weeks, so please be sure to register at the beginning of the year.

Parents may not “show up” at a field trip location. Volunteers must be approved and follow the procedure as listed above.

Dress Code

TOPS – GIRLS AND BOYS

White, red, navy blue, light blue

Short or long sleeve knit polo shirt, button-up shirt or blouse- all collared

Polo shirt

Approved PTO Spirit Wear and Friends of Montessori t-shirts

BOTTOMS – GIRLS

Blue jeans, navy blue or khaki shorts, skorts, skirt, pants, or jumper

(Skirts, shorts, and dresses may be no more than 3 finger-widths above the kneecap. Tights may be worn with skirts, shorts or dresses that are 3 finger-widths above the kneecap).

BOTTOMS – BOYS

Blue jeans, navy blue or khaki shorts or pants

SHOES – GIRLS AND BOYS

All shoes should be closed-toe type. No flip-flops or Crocs.

SWEATERS

Navy blue or white

Hoods must be removed upon entering the school.

BACKPACKS

No rolling backpacks

The dress code will be enforced by the following procedures:

Day 1: Verbal warning

Day 2: Note sent home

Day 3: Parents called to bring appropriate clothes or pick up the child.

FREE DRESS

Occasionally, students will earn free dress bracelets as acknowledgement for perfect attendance, participation in a special event, etc. In addition, PTO sponsors Fabulous First Friday Free Dress (FFFFD) each 1st Friday of the month beginning in October. In order to wear free dress on FFFFD, students are encouraged to drop a donation of any amount in the donations box upon entering school for that day.

Fees, Tuition, and Supplies

If space is available, tuition-based Pre-K is accessible for students who do not meet eligibility requirements to attend prekindergarten. Three- and four-year-old students who do not meet eligibility requirements are required to pay a monthly tuition of \$569.00 (\$5,116 annually). Kindergarten – 12th grade classes are free to all Houston ISD students.

Pre-Kindergarten tuition is due on the first business day of each month. Payments are accepted by check, money order or online and by credit card through SchoolPay. Payments received after the 15th of the month are considered late, at which time a \$25 late fee is assessed. Failure to pay within specified timelines will result in the student's withdrawal from the program. Year-end tuition statements are provided upon request.

Supplies in a Montessori class differ somewhat from other types of classes. We set up supply shelves and teach the children to respect resources for the community. A supply fee of \$45 is collected by the PTO and reserved for establishing and replenishing supplies throughout the year in each classroom.

Other fees throughout the year may be requested for field trips, class parties, or specific events as necessary.

Accidents, Illnesses, and Medications at School

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

In case of emergencies, it is imperative that we be able to contact you. Provide on your enrollment card any and all phone numbers of people that you would like notified in case we are unable to contact you. **At least 2 emergency contact numbers are required.** Note that only persons listed on the enrollment card are allowed to pick up your child without a note from the parents/guardians. Notify the office and the nurse of any changes in your emergency/enrollment information.

MINOR ACCIDENTS

In the event your child has a minor accident (cut, scrape, etc.), your child's teacher will make every effort to communicate with you. If a more serious accident occurs, parents/guardians are notified immediately. In the event of an emergency situation with your child, including seizures, we will call 911 and will call the parent/guardian immediately thereafter.

ILLNESS

We ask that you keep your children at home if they have a temperature of 100 degrees or higher (before administering medication), are vomiting, have diarrhea, or show any sign of an infectious disease. Please notify the nurse if your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease so that other necessary contacts may be notified. All information is confidential. If your child has been prescribed an antibiotic, please keep him or her at home for at least 24 hours after the first dose or until the child is well. Have your physician schedule short-term medications around your child's school schedule when possible.

MEDICATIONS

If your child is on long-term medication, you must obtain a new physician's order every new school year, signed by the physician and parent/guardian. The medication must be in the original container labeled by the pharmacist with the student's name on it. Students are not allowed to carry any prescription or over the counter medication. All medications are locked up in the clinic. You will be notified in advance when medications require a refill.

SCREENINGS

All students, depending on grade, are required by law to receive the following screenings: vision, hearing, acanthuses nigricans, and spinal screening. A referral letter will be sent to you if a problem has been detected. If your child wears glasses, it very important that he or she wears them to school every day.

IMMUNIZATIONS

All students are required to have all appropriate immunizations before attending school. If your child is medically exempt, you must provide the school with a statement signed by a physician. To claim exclusion for reasons of conscience, including religious belief, a signed original affidavit obtained by the parent or guardian from the Department of State Health Services must be provided by the parent or guardian. Information regarding free or low cost vaccine clinics is available in the nurse's office.

LICE

Children sent home with head lice must be nit-free when returning to school. The nurse must check the child before they are allowed to return to class. Lice are a nuisance for families. Remind your child to only use their own brush, hair ties, etc and not to share these personal care items with others. If you have an Early Childhood child who naps, you are expected to take home your sheet/pillowcase regularly for washing. Should a child be sent home with head lice, the nurse will send a letter home to all students in the classroom.

Discipline and Safety on School Grounds

The following student discipline plan was developed by the School Safety Committee.

General expectations for all students:

Parents will refer to the Code of Student Conduct and the HISD flow chart for discipline procedures.

Follow directions given by school personnel and designated parent volunteers.

Come to class with required materials.

Complete class work as assigned by the teacher.

Respect others and their property.

Use proper hallway ready behavior at all times (quiet while walking in hallways).

Keep hands and feet to yourself.

Electronic devices (except cell phones), glass containers, toys, gum and candy are prohibited.

If your child must carry a cell phone, it must be turned off during the day. If a cell phone is used or heard during the day, it will be turned into the office and a parent must pick up the phone and conference with the principal. Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct for information about fines and cell phones.

Classroom Expectations:

Teachers, support staff, and administrators will enforce student management in the classroom. All students will follow procedures established by each grade level and ancillary teacher regarding rules and consequences.

Restroom Expectations:

A group of students must be accompanied by an adult to the restroom.

An individual student may visit the restroom with a restroom/hall pass.

Standing on toilet seats is prohibited.

Use quiet voices in the restroom.

Always flush toilets and urinals after use.

Placing inappropriate objects in the toilet is prohibited.

Students must wash hands after using the restroom.

Avoid dripping water on the floor for safety.

Respect the privacy of others.

Hallway Ready Expectations:

Students must walk quietly, staying to the right side of the stairways and hallways.

Students waiting in line for a water fountain or for any other reason should form a line along the wall.

Cafeteria Expectations:

Sit at assigned tables.

Speak softly.

Walk and move in the cafeteria without disturbing others.

Request permission to leave the table for any reason.

Each student must clear his or her area after eating.

Students must wait at the cafeteria exit to be picked up by the classroom teacher.

The cafeteria will be supervised by parent volunteers, teachers, teacher assistants, and/or other support staff.

Teachers are responsible for teaching and reinforcing proper cafeteria behavior.

Cafeteria food may be consumed only in the cafeteria or the designated picnic areas when supervised by an adult.

Playground/Recess Expectations:

Playground equipment must be used appropriately.

Rough playing, such as tackling or wrestling, is not permitted.

Auditorium/Event Expectations:

Appropriate concert or event behavior, as detailed by the classroom and ancillary teachers is expected and enforced.

After School Program

The before and after school program at Wilson is provided by Little Heroes. For information about the program, please visit www.littleheroesap.com.

Parent Participation and Observations

The Montessori classroom is probably quite different from the classroom you attended as a child. We strongly encourage you to come observe your child interacting with the students, teachers, and materials in our unique learning environment. Plan to spend an hour, twice a year, watching the flow. Your child's teacher will have an observation form to help you notice the active learning happening in the dynamic classroom. During your visit, we ask that you follow our "ground rules" to help you feel more comfortable in our child centered environment:

1. Use a soft, quiet voice when you enter the classroom.
2. A rug denotes a child's workspace. Walk around this workspace. If the children are in a group, walk around the outside of the group.
3. Sit quietly and let the children continue with their activities. If your child wants your attention, remind him/her that you have come to watch him/her work.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Educating your child to reach her/his full potential takes a strong partnership between parent and teacher. We provide regular communication about class activities and invite regular communication from parents about home activities. We ask that you plan to meet with your child's teacher twice a year for a conference. This time will be used to explain and evaluate your child's class work, discuss any concerns, and set goals.

VOLUNTEERING

We highly value parental involvement. We invite you to participate in any way you can as a partner with the school. Your active contribution of time and energy sends a powerful message to your child that school and learning are important family values.

You have many opportunities to volunteer, both in and out of the classroom:

- Listen to children read to you
- Share your talents [share with a class a special skill, such as playing an instrument]
- Cut out, sew, or build class materials
- Work on a committee

- Help with a fundraiser
- Assist teachers with classroom preparation
- Tutor students who need additional help
- Assist in organizing school events
- Accompany a class on a field trip
- Assist the main office with clerical duties

You will receive a volunteer invitation form to indicate how you would like to help make Wilson the best school it can be for your children. As indicated in the parent pledge you signed and returned, a minimum of 10 events (approximately 20 hours) is expected for each family over the course of the school year.

VISITOR POLICY

Our visitor policy was established by the district to protect the safety and welfare of students, school personnel, and school property.

- All visitors must enter the school through the main doors on Yupon St. during visitor hours (8:30 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.) and must report directly to the front office. Parents are not signed in to go to classrooms until 8:45 a.m. for observations, volunteering, etc.
- All visitors are required to sign in, present identification, and wear a visitor's badge while on school property.
- Staff will ask any visitor without a visitor's badge to report to the office.

VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS – VIPS

All volunteers who work with students, must register online and pass a criminal background check before they can participate as a volunteer. Please follow the steps on the HISD web site to become a VIPS. Someone can help you do this in the school office on school computers, if needed. Remember that it does take an average of two weeks to gain approval. If you are planning on attending a field trip as a chaperone, you must be approved. Register early!

Friends of Montessori

Friends of Montessori (FOM) is a 501(c)(3) organization made up of volunteer parents, teachers, and community members dedicated to expanding the opportunity for and maintaining the integrity and excellence of Montessori programs in the Houston public schools.

FOM will report updates at each PTO meeting and at each parent education event. Announcements regarding parent education opportunities and other events will be sent throughout the year. To find out more, join a committee, and check announcements, visit the web site at www.fomhouston.org/.

Montessori Philosophy

Montessori is a philosophy and a teaching method with the fundamental tenet that a child learns best within a socially enriched environment that supports each individual's unique development.

The History of Montessori

Dr. Maria Montessori, the creator of what is called "The Montessori Method of Education," based this new

education on her scientific observations of young children's behavior. As the first woman physician to graduate from the University of Rome, Montessori became involved with education as a doctor treating children labeled as developmentally challenged.

In 1907 she was invited to open a day care center for the children of desperately poor families in the San Lorenzo slums of Rome. She called this school "Children's House" and based the program on her observations that young children learn best in a homelike setting, filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide experiences contributing to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners. She began carrying her message throughout the world in 1912, but interest in the U.S. did not become strong until the mid-1950s, followed by the organization of the American Montessori Society (AMS) in 1960.

Montessori's theories included such revolutionary premises as:

- Children are to be respected as different from adults and as individuals who are different from one another.
- Children create themselves through purposeful activity or work.
- The most important years for learning are from birth to age six.
- Children possess unusual sensitivity and mental powers for absorbing and learning from the people and materials in their environment.

Unique Characteristics of the Montessori Method

1. **The whole child approach.** The primary goal of a Montessori program is to help each child reach full potential in all areas of life. Activities promote the development of social skills, emotional growth, and physical coordination as well as cognitive preparation. The holistic curriculum, under the direction of a specially prepared teacher, allows the child to experience the joy of learning, time to enjoy the process, and ensure the development of self-esteem. It provides the experiences from which children create their knowledge.
2. **The prepared environment.** In order for self-directed learning to take place, the whole learning environment (room, materials and social climate) must be supportive of the learner. The teacher provides necessary resources, including opportunities for children to function in a safe and positive climate. The teacher thus gains the children's trust, which enables them to try new things and build self-confidence.
3. **Sensitive periods.** During the period from birth until age 6, children show what Dr. Montessori called sensitive periods, periods when they are psychologically ready to learn skills and ideas more easily than at any other time in their lives. For example, she observed that the sensitive period for acquiring a sense of order is from about age 2 to 3. The sensitive period for writing is somewhere between age 3 and 4. The period of sensitivity to words and numbers is age 4 to 5. These sensitive periods pass, never to return again. In the traditional school, according to Dr. Montessori, the basic academic skills are taught to children largely after their sensitive periods have passed.
4. **Three Period Lesson.** Maria Montessori adopted the Three Period Lesson method to teach nomenclature, initially naming things. After receiving the experience of exploring a certain material or work, the child will require language to express that experience. Language helps the child to clarify, classify, organize, and crystallize the experience into his or her mind. The first part of the lesson is the presentation of the object, "This is...." The attributes of the object are noticed and discussed. The second part of the lesson is the recognition period, "Show me...." This is time for games and fun activities with the work presented. The third period of the lesson is the feedback period, "What is this?" This period incorporates the use of memory and verbalization of all he has learned from his experience with the piece of work. The journey from first period

to third period may take many months for the young child. It allows for the process of much exploration, acquiring language of the characteristics and attributes of objects so that the adventure continues and culminates in the synthesis of the third and final period.

5. The Montessori materials. Dr. Montessori's observations of the kinds of "toys" that children enjoy and return repeatedly to play with led her to design a number of multisensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials that facilitate the learning of skills and concepts.
6. The teacher. Originally called a "directress," the Montessori teacher functions as designer of the environment, resource person, role model, demonstrator, record-keeper, and meticulous observer of each child's behavior and growth. The teacher acts as a facilitator of learning. Extensive educational training is required for a full AMS credential, including a year as an intern, student-teaching with an AMS certified master teacher, and specializing in the age group with which a teacher will work (i.e., infants and toddlers, three-to-six year-olds, six-to-nine year-olds, nine-to-twelve year-olds and secondary level).

The Four Planes of Development in Montessori Education

Dr. Montessori's extensive scientific research of young people led her to define four planes of human development – knowing that each child is a unique individual and will grow at his or her own pace, these planes provide a general understanding of social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Each plane is divided into the first half, where new skills are introduced, and the second half, where skills are mastered.

1st Plane 0-6 years "What is it?"

- Child learns through sensorial exploration
- Child learns through movement and manipulation
- Child goes through "sensitive periods" of learning
- Child learns through repetitive activity
- Child is an egocentric being
- Child is eager to learn about the "parts" of life
- Child struggles to control his impulses
- Child has a gap between mind and muscle
- Child requires order and organization in life and learning environments

The first half of the first plane, where the great world is introduced, is generally grouped into infants (birth through 18 months old) and toddlers (18 months through 3 years old). In the second half of the first plane, the Early Childhood group (3-6 years old) has a wide range of materials and activities to explore and master these new skills.

2nd Plane 6-12years "How does it work?"

- Child learns partially through hands-on exploration and partially by abstract thinking processes
- Child learns partially through movement and manipulation and partially through static study
- Sensitive periods relates to learning about relationships and community living

- Child becomes a social and collaborative being
- Child is eager to learn about the relations and interconnections of life
- Child struggles to differentiate the needs of self from the needs of others
- Child has a gap between his or her mind and emotions
- Child's imagination sparks learning motivation

In the elementary program the mixed age groups continue with Lower Elementary (6-9 years old, 1st through 3rd grade) and Upper Elementary (9-12 years old, 4th through 6th grade).

3rd Plane 12-18 years "What does it mean? Who am I?"

- Child learns through self-reflection, observation, and research
- Child moves out into field testing of life skills in the real world
- Child moves into sensitive periods of discovering his life mission and purpose
- Child discovers and explores romantic and sexual forces
- Child struggles to control emotional and sexual energies
- Child finds there is a gap between one's ideals and the realities of the world
- Child becomes a political and philosophic being
- Child is eager to learn about the meaning of it all

The third plane is separated into Middle School (12-14 years old, 7th through 8th grade) and High School (14-18 years old, 9th through 12th grade).

4th Plane 18-24 "Where do I fit in?"

- Individual learns through real life experience and experimentation
- Individual attempts to craft first adult lifestyle
- Individual joins adult community on full time basis
- Individual experiences spousal and parental relationships
- Individual experiences the heights of creativity
- Individual experiences the limits of society
- Individual moves into the sensitive period for making critical life choices and experiencing their consequences
- Individual struggles to control and coordinate his personal ambition with the demands of family and/or organizational life

Montessori Principles

Each Montessori classroom operates on the principle of freedom within limits. Every program has its set of ground rules, which differ from age to age, but is always based on the core Montessori belief of respect: for oneself, each other and the environment.

Children are free to work at their own pace with materials they have chosen, either alone or with others. The teacher relies on observations of the children to determine which new activities and materials to introduce to an individual child or to a small or large group. The aim is to encourage active, self-directed learning and to strike a balance of individual mastery with small group collaboration within the whole group community.

The multi-year age span in each class provides a family-like grouping where learning can take place naturally. More experienced children share what they have learned while reinforcing their own knowledge. Because of this, peer group learning is intrinsic to Montessori. This collaboration provides more opportunity for conversation and language experience than conventional early education settings.

Creativity in the Montessori Classroom

Creativity flourishes in an atmosphere of acceptance and trust. Montessori adherents recognize that each child, from toddler to teenager, learns and expresses himself in a very individual way. Music, art, storytelling, movement, and drama are a part of every Montessori program. There are other things particular to the Montessori environment to encourage creative development; many materials that stimulate interest and involvement; an emphasis on the sensory aspect of experience; and the opportunity for both verbal and non-verbal modes of learning.

Discipline in the Montessori Classroom

The goal of discipline is to teach the child self-discipline in a positive way, enabling the child to be cooperative and responsible for his or her own behavior, yet increasingly aware of the needs of others. The Montessori tenets of respect for self, for friends, and for the community are the essential framework.

Teachers always consider the child's developmental level and emotional needs in every part of their interaction. They use privileges, responsibilities, and natural/logical consequences rather than traditional rewards and punishments.

With our small adult to student ratio and well-trained faculty working within the structured child-centered classroom, the children know and appreciate what is appropriate, safe, and kind. However, from time to time, the teacher must step in. You might hear statements like: "Hitting hurts, use gentle hands." Or, "Pencils have sharp points. I get worried when I see you throwing the pencil; the sharp point could hurt someone. Pencils are for writing." When the behavior persists, the teacher will be more directive, such as: "You may sit at a table and use the pencil for writing or you may choose another piece of work." As much as possible, children are involved in finding solutions through choices and logical consequences after accepting responsibility for their actions. Children may be offered a time to refocus and collect their thoughts. Children respond well to respect and positive expectations; modeling and noticing positive behavior is a primary teaching tool for us.

Animals in the Montessori Classroom

An important part of the Montessori philosophy is a reverence for life. To bring this into the classroom we have live plants and animals that the children can observe and in some cases help to care for. Let your child's teacher know if you have concerns regarding potential allergies your child might have to any animal in the classroom.

After Montessori

Montessori children are adaptable. They have learned to work independently and in groups. Since they have been encouraged to make decisions from an early age, these children are problem solvers who can make choices and manage their time well. They have also been encouraged to exchange ideas and to discuss their work freely with others. Good communication skills ease the way in new settings.

Research has shown that the best predictor of future success is a strong sense of self-esteem balanced with a growing awareness of the rights of others. Montessori programs, based on self-directed, non-competitive activities, help children develop good self-images and the confidence to face challenges and change with optimism.

Montessori at Home

Nutrition

Nutrition is an important part of our curriculum. Your child will learn that protein, grains (breads and cereals), fruits, and vegetables are all important for good health. Please avoid foods high in sugar, artificial sweetener, and trans fats.

Help your child become as responsible as possible for preparing snacks and food. Try preparing muffins or pancakes on weekends when you have more time, and freeze them in individual packages for a quick, nutritious breakfast during the week.

The following foods are good examples of foods you and your child can prepare for snacks or lunch:

Protein: cheese, nuts, yogurt, lean meats, boiled eggs, beans, cottage cheese, peanut butter. Grains and cereals: low sugar muffins, pasta, rice, whole grain crackers, rice cakes, whole grain cereal, bagels, pancakes, tortillas. Fruits and vegetables (fresh and in season are preferable over frozen or canned): apple slices, orange segments, pears, peaches, grapes, strawberries, pineapple chunks, banana, dried fruits, carrot sticks, stuffed celery, sliced bell peppers, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, broccoli. Vegetables can always be served with dip or salad dressing.

Effects of Electronic Media on Children

Adapted from “Visual Media and Young Children’s Attention Spans,” by Gloria deGaetano

The ability to mentally focus, attend, and sustain concentration over a period of time is an internal process developed in early childhood.

A “good brain for learning” must develop strong neural highways. As children develop strong neural highways, they also develop an attention span. Research shows that extensive exposure to television and video games may promote development of “scan and shift” attention, as opposed to focused attention.

Dr. Jerome Singer, a researcher on children and television at Yale states: “television, with its clever use of constantly changing short sequences, holds our attention by a sensory bombardment that maximizes orienting responses . . . we are constantly drawn back to the set and to processing each new sequence of information as it is presented. The set trains us to watch it.”

We can help children develop focused attention necessary for learning by keeping the following in mind.:

1. Limit TV viewing. Research demonstrates that the viewing habits of toddlers and preschoolers will likely become their viewing habits as adults. It is imperative to start teaching healthy TV habits early.
2. Provide mental challenges such as giving children choices, asking them questions, and providing materials for play rather than a lot of expensive toys. A puzzle instead of a video game; a trip to an art museum instead of a movie sometimes; an aquarium for the child’s bedroom instead of a TV – these are gifts which will nurture the development of an appropriate attention span.
3. Don’t fill children’s time every minute. Boredom, or down time, is a necessary part of developing intrinsic motivation, along with deep understanding of one’s own creative process. To develop the ability to concentrate,

youngsters must be left alone to acquire ingenuity and inventiveness.

4. Avoid the temptation to fill leisure moments with TV. Audio books are as convenient as television for most parents and are much more effective for developing young attention spans. With the visual image, there is no need to use the imagination. Listening to the symbolic system of language in the form of a great story, however, requires attention and imagination.

5. Choose television programs and videos with a slower pace more in line with “real-world rhythms.” Fast-paced images trigger more reactions than responses. Also, refrain from purchasing any video-game system before a child is ten, if at all possible. By age 10 most children’s brains will have matured enough to enjoy a good mental challenge and trigger-happy games will be less satisfying to them.

Positive Parenting Guidelines

Your child’s learning experiences at school will greatly benefit when Montessori principles are practiced at home. The following guidelines, from the book *Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelsen, describe how parents can reinforce the discipline methods your child will experience in the classroom.

1. Misbehaving children may be discouraged children who have mistaken ideas on how to achieve their primary goal—to belong. Their mistaken ideas lead them to misbehavior. We cannot be effective unless we address the mistaken beliefs rather than just the misbehavior.

2. Use encouragement to help children feel “belonging” so the motivation for misbehaving will be eliminated. Celebrate each step in the direction of improvement rather than focusing on mistakes.

3. A great way to help children feel encouraged is to spend special time “being with them.” Many teachers have noticed a dramatic change in a “problem child” after spending five minutes simply sharing what they both like to do for fun.

4. When tucking children into bed, ask them to share with you their “saddest time” during the day and their “happiest time” during the day. Then you share with them. You will be surprised what you learn.

5. Have family meetings or class meetings to solve problems with cooperation and mutual respect. This is the key to creating a loving, respectful atmosphere while helping children develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and problem-solving skills.

6. Give children meaningful jobs. In the name of expediency, many parents and teachers do things that children could do for themselves and one another. Children feel belonging when they know they can make a real contribution.

7. Decide together what jobs need to be done. Put them all in a jar and let each child draw out a few each week; that way no one is stuck with the same jobs all the time. Teachers can invite children to help them make class rules and list them on a chart titled, “We decided:”. Children have ownership, motivation, and enthusiasm when they are included in the decisions.

8. Take time for training. Make sure children understand what “clean the kitchen” means to you. To them it may mean simply putting the dishes in the sink. Parents and teachers may ask, “What is your understanding of what is expected?”

9. Teach and model mutual respect. One way is to be kind and firm at the same time—kind to show respect for the child, and firm to show respect for yourself and “the needs of the situation.” This is difficult during conflict, so use the next guideline whenever you can.

10. Proper timing will improve your effectiveness tenfold. It does not “work” to deal with a problem at the time of conflict—emotions get in the way. Teach children about cooling-off periods. You (or the children) can go to a separate room and do something to make yourself/them feel better—and then work on the problem with mutual respect.

11. Get rid of the idea that in order to make children do better, first you have to make them feel worse. Do you feel like doing better when you feel humiliated? This suggests a whole new look at “time out.”

12. Use Positive Time Out. Let your children help you design a pleasant area (cushions, books, music, stuffed animals) that will help them feel better. Remember that children do better when they feel better. Then you can ask your children, when they are upset, “Do you think it would help you to take some positive time out?”

13. Punishment may “work” if all you are interested in is stopping misbehavior for “the moment.” Sometimes we must beware of what works when the long-range results are negative—resentment, rebellion, revenge, or retreat.

14. Teach children that mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn! A great way to teach children that mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn is to model this yourself by using the Three Rs of Recovery after you have made a mistake: (1) Recognize your mistake. (2) Reconcile: Be willing to say “I’m sorry, I didn’t like the way I handled that.” (3) Resolve: Focus on solutions rather than blame. (#3 is effective only if you do #1 & #2 first.)

15. Focus on solutions instead of consequences. Many parents and teachers try to disguise punishment by calling it a logical consequence. Get children involved in finding solutions that are (1) related (2) respectful (3) reasonable.

16. Make sure the message of love and respect gets through. Start with “I care about you. I am concerned about this situation. Will you work with me on a solution?”

17. Have fun! Bring joy into homes and classrooms.