

Dear Parents and Children.

Welcome to the Aberdeen Hills Montessori Preschool/Kindergarten. We are a preschool that is licensed by the Ministry of Health and we strive to offer children opportunities to experience the excitement of learning in an enriched environment.

A Brief History of the Montessori Philosophy

Maria Montessori, who lived from 1870 to 1952, was a brilliant and original educator, scientist, healer, humanitarian and philosopher.

Soon after graduating from medical school in Rome and stimulated by her further studies in psychology, she worked with children with mental and physical challenges. She based her teaching methods on principles of two prominent French physicians whose research she admired, Itard and Seguin. Remarkably, the children progressed so quickly that Montessori signed them up for ordinary school exams, which they passed without difficulty.

Montessori then turned her thoughts to the education of the ordinary child. She returned to University to further her academic work in educational philosophy, psychology and anthropology. In 1907 she organized schools in Rome. She found after careful and lengthy observation of children, that given the opportunities and thoughtfully developed materials, they could thrive and quickly absorb complex skills and sophisticated knowledge. Children under her guidance also developed self-discipline. For two decades, Montessori observed children and then tied her observations into the theories she wrote about.

Montessori Schools were introduced to North America in 1912 and now there are over 2,500 schools in North America. Today, Montessori schools are found worldwide. Montessori developed the materials that we see in all of the early childhood settings of today, for example; child sized furniture and learning toys (virtually unavailable until the 1960's).

A Young Child's Special Mind

The most basic principle in Montessori's theory of education is that the learning capacity of a young child is fundamentally different from that of an adult.

Montessori frequently compared the young child's mind to a sponge. It literally absorbs information from the environment. Since the child retains this ability until they are almost seven years old, Dr. Montessori reasoned that a child could handle materials that would demonstrate basic educational information to him/her. Over 100 years of experience have proved her theory, that a child can learn to read, write and calculate the same natural way that the child learns to walk and talk. In the Montessori classroom, the equipment allows the child to do this at his/her own periods of interest and readiness.

Sensitive Periods

Another observation of Dr. Montessori's, which has been reinforced by modern research, is the importance of sensitive periods for early learning. These are periods of intense fascination for learning a particular characteristic or skill such as going up and down steps, putting things in order, counting and reading. It is easier for the child to learn a particular skill during the corresponding sensitive period than at any other time in her life. The Montessori classroom takes advantage of this fact by allowing the child the freedom to select individual activities that correspond to his/her own periods of interest.

The Classroom

Our classroom is divided into learning areas, which include math, science/cultural, practical life, art, library, language, sensorial, toys and puzzles.

The teacher, on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, introduces the children to the activities in these areas. The activities begin with the simplest and progress to the more complex. Once the activities have been introduced, the children are free to choose activities on their own as their interest leads them.

Our program is designed to promote independence, respect for self and others, and to instill a natural love of learning that children can carry with themselves throughout life.

The Teachers

Every teacher at the Aberdeen Hills Montessori Preschool is qualified and shares the Montessori Educational Philosophy. Each teacher is a skilled professional chosen for the special gifts they bring to this important work. An intuitive love and understanding of children is on the highest list of prerequisites.

Holly Schafer, Administrator

Holly is licensed Early Childhood Educator and Montessori Primary Teacher with over 25 years experience working with young children in many different capacities.

Prior to attending the Early Childhood Education Program at Okanagan University College, Holly taught preschool in New York, NY where she ran a program for two to three year olds called the "Two Group."

Upon completion of her studies in the Early Childhood Education field in 1993, she was hired as an Assistant Teacher at the Okanagan Montessori Preschool in Kelowna, B.C. This was a wonderful experience! Having been exposed to many preschool and day care environments, Holly found what she believed to be excellence in Early Childhood Education. Holly found her niche in the Montessori classroom and could never imagine a career that could be as fulfilling and inspiring as working with children in a Montessori environment.

Holly went on to take her St. Nicholas practical training and examination at Pacific Montessori School in Victoria during the summer of 1995. In March of 2002, she completed the Montessori Foundations Level 1 Certificate at the Western Montessori Teachers College in Port Moody, B.C. Because of her dedication and love for children, appreciation of the Montessori Method and desire to offer such a program to the families of Kamloops, she made the decision to open the Kamloops Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten and the Kamloops Montessori Academy in 1998.

Since the opening of our programs at our main campus at our Greystone location, we have expanded our programs to the Aberdeen Hills Montessori Preschool/ Kindergarten, and the Sahali Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten.

Megan Hayes

Megan was born and raised in Tsawwassen, B.C. Megan always knew from a young age that she wanted to work with children and followed her love of children to Thompson Rivers University in 2006. Megan completed her Early Childhood Education Diploma and Special Needs classes. Last year she took her Montessori Teachers training and also attended the American Montessori teacher's conference last spring in Boston, where she expanded her knowledge in the Montessori Method. Megan is in her third year of working for Holly, but worked the previous two at the Greystone campus in the main classroom. Megan is thrilled to be at the Aberdeen Campus and she looks forward to getting to know your children and families over the next year.

Erin Rugolo

Erin is pleased to begin her first year at Aberdeen Hills Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten. For the past two years Erin has subbed for Kamloops Montessori, Aberdeen Hills, and Sahali Montessori. Erin recently graduated from the Early Childhood Education program at Thompson Rivers University in 2009, with honours. Erin completed her Montessori Foundations course at the Western Montessori Teachers College in Langley, B.C. Erin chose the educator field because she believes in the importance of early learning and wants to be a positive influence and guide in the education of children.

Rhonda Ward (On Maternity Leave)

Rhonda Ward is pleased to begin her fifth year of teaching at the Aberdeen Hills Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten.

Rhonda graduated from the Early Childhood Education Program at UCC in 1999 with honours. She has worked in the field of Early Childhood Education as a preschool teacher and as the Children's Program Coordinator for Parents Anonymous for the Kamloops Family Resource Society. In March 2008, Rhonda completed her Montessori Foundations course at the Western Montessori Teacher College in Port Coquitlam, BC.

Rhonda is currently on Maternity leave.

Shalyn Goddard (On Maternity Leave)

Shalyn Goddard is the mother of three boys, Treysen, who is 8, and attends grade 3 in a Montessori classroom, Kaiden, who is 4, and attends Aberdeen Hills Montessori, and her newest son Gage, born summer 2010.

In 1999, she moved to Kamloops from Quesnel to attend TRU where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 2003, as well as a Bachelor of Elementary Education Degree in 2006. In March 2008, Shalyn completed her Montessori Foundations course at the Western Montessori Teacher College in Port Coquitlam, BC.

Shalyn has been teaching at Aberdeen Hills Montessori since September 2008. She loves working with the children and being a part of their development.

Shalyn is currently on Maternity leave, and will be returning in September 2011.

Enrolment

Prior to applying for enrolment, parents must have toured or observed at the school.

Parking

Parking is available in front of the school on Van Horne Drive; please watch for "no Parking Zones", or in the lower parking lot near the playground. We ask that parents do not pull into the upper parking lot as it is a safety concern for the children attending the school and is also designated staff parking.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival times will begin promptly at 8:30AM and 12:00PM. We will use the exterior door of our classroom for both arrivals and dismissals.

Children may place their outside shoes neatly in their labelled cubby at the entrance. Please try to have your child at school on time as we will begin with a "group time" once everyone has arrived.

As there is much classroom preparation and planning required by teachers in our type of classroom environment, it is essential that children be picked up promptly.

Pick up will be at 11:00AM and 2:30PM, unless the teachers have been previously notified. A late pick up fee of \$5.00 for every 10 minutes of lateness will apply. Thank you for your cooperation with regard to arrival and dismissal times.

Special Note

We ask that you please escort your child by hand on the sidewalk, to and from the school for obvious safety reasons. If you require help to escort your child safely, we will be happy to assist you.

Parental Involvement

We will hold a parent orientation evening during the second or third week of school. Times and dates will be posted in September.

Conferences

We will hold parent/teacher conferences in November and then again in April. This will give us the opportunity to discuss your child's development and progress with you. The school will be closed for classes on the day of our conferences.

Observations

We will also offer parent observation times in late November and late April. At this time you will have the opportunity to see your child work within the classroom.

Family Events

Parents will be invited to attend our Winter Program and also a Mother's Tea.

We will offer Parent Educational Evenings regarding Montessori philosophy and method and related topics, once or twice a year. We like to bring in a guest speaker, when possible, so please mark your calendars for these special events.

We would love to know of any parents who have special talents or interests that they may like to share with our class i.e. artists, musicians, etc. Also, if you have any ideas for field trips we welcome your input.

Gradual Entry

During the first week of school, we will implement a gradual entry program. The children will attend class for one hour only on the first few days of school. This gives the children the opportunity to adjust to preschool in a gradual way. Gradual entry is an **essential** and valuable process for **all** children attending a Montessori program.

Absenteeism

If your child will be absent from school, for any reason, please notify the school.

Discipline Policy

Warmth, flexibility, and perceptiveness towards each child's needs and style are basic in providing care and guidance for children. Each child's persistence, creativity, learning and constructive co-operation as well as self reliance must be supported and reinforced.

We believe that involving the child through choices and consequences is important when guiding a child's behaviour. In this way, children are given opportunities to develop independence and co-operation. Whenever a child's behaviour needs correction, we will implement natural and logical consequences to give choices.

Logical consequences have the following qualities

1. They express rules of social living. They are related to misbehaviour.
2. They are related to misbehaviour.
3. They separate the deed from the doer. (Logical consequences don't imply that the child is naughty because they are misbehaving), instead they communicate for example, ("While I don't like what you are doing, I still care for you".)
4. Logical consequences are for dealing with the present, not the past behaviour.
5. They are given in a friendly way.
6. They permit choice. (With choice, a child has a stake in choosing respectable behaviour rather than being told how to behave.)

As a last resort, and when other discipline methods haven't worked, we believe that a "*rest Time*" may be appropriate. This will be used only when a child's behaviour has become disruptive. Having a rest time is a way to empower the child to make a conscious decision to regain control of his or her behaviour.

Having a rest is also a choice. The child can choose to settle down or to take some time out. Having a rest is also a *form* of logical consequences. "Having a rest" in our classroom will be implemented in the form of the teacher directing the child to have a rest at the classroom "Peace table".

In summary, we believe that children should always be dealt with in a respectful way. Effective discipline is a learning process. The goal of discipline should be self-discipline, to guide children to be responsible and co-operative.

Sample Daily Schedule

An example of our daily schedule would be as follows:

8:30AM	Greet each child at the door upon arrival	12:00 PM
8:35AM	A circle time, good morning gathering, including songs, Finger plays, news, show and tell, and perhaps an activity presentation or theme discussion.	12:05PM
9:00 AM	Outside time	1:30 – 2:00PM
9:30AM	Work time (children are free to choose activities ranging from toy shelf, math, language, science, practical life and cultural activities). The teachers will also give individual lessons or group lessons to the children during this time, or in small groups. Free flow snack.	12:20 –1:30PM
10:40 AM	Group Time, songs, discussion, goodbye song	2:15PM
11:00 AM	Dismissal	2:30PM

This schedule may vary, depending on what is planned for the day; e.g. we may be doing a special cooking project or craft. On "good weather" days, we may have projects outdoors, etc. Field trips will also be planned (Approximately four) throughout the year.

Newsletters

A monthly newsletter will be sent home each month to keep you informed of our classroom activities, special visitors, field trips, themes, projects, etc.

Show and Tell

Show and tell can be a wonderful opportunity for your child to develop skills in language and public speaking, which in turn enhances your child's self esteem and confidence. Your child can bring a special item they have chosen for show and tell on any Monday or Tuesday. (participation is voluntary). **We ask that children do not bring toys or jewellery to school.** Items for show and tell could include: items from nature, leaves, flowers, rocks, pets, books, new siblings, visiting grandparents, anything that is of interest to the child.

Snacks

A healthy grain snack will be provided for your child at school. We have implemented a parent snack participation system. Parents are asked to sign up on a sheet posted outside. Every month, we ask parents to contribute a fruit or vegetable for our snack time. An example is 10 apples, a small bag of carrots, raisins, etc.

Occasionally, we will have sweets at birthday celebrations, our Halloween, Winter Party, 100th Day Party, Valentine's Day, and wind-up parties, please note that we have a child attending with a severe nut allergy, therefore we are a nut free school.

Birthday Celebrations

We have a special celebration for each child's birthday. We ask parents to send a photo that depicts the child during each year of life, e.g. age 1, 2 and 3. Parents are invited to send snacks for this celebration, if they wish. Parents are also invited to attend the celebration.

Special Visitors

Occasionally we will have special visitors in our classrooms. Typically these visitors may have a skill or talent that the children can learn from, e.g. fire fighter, dental hygienist, juggler, weavers, florists, etc. Often these visits will tie into a theme that we have been discussing in class or a special interest that has been expressed by the children.

Practicum Students

We may accept a practicum student from the Early Childhood Education program at U.C.C., from time to time. These students will be under the staff's supervision at all times. It has been my experience that having a practicum student can be of benefit to our students at the school, as many of these practicum students share new activities and relate well with the children. We would also like to give others in our field the opportunity to experience "the Montessori way".

We will let you know in advance, if and when we accept practicum students into the classroom.

Field Trips

Throughout the year, our classes will be taking field trips to various places of interest around Kamloops. **Parents will be responsible for transportation to and from field trips** (if this is a problem for any parent, they may initiate carpooling arrangements with another parent). When appropriate, we'd love to have parents join us on our field trips.

What to Bring on the First Day of School in September

- ◆ A labelled drinking cup and a labelled pair of inside shoes.
- ◆ A labelled change of clothing (only if your child is prone to accidents or spills).
- ◆ 10 post-dated cheques dated the 1st of each month, if not already submitted at registration.

Winter Months

As weather permits, we will be going outdoors for a playtime. Please send appropriate clothing with your child. On snowy, cold days please send snow pants, snow boots, hat and gloves. Parents please label your children's gloves, hats, snow pants and jackets.

Spring and Summer

Please send your child to school with sunscreen applied and a hat.

Health and Safety

Once a month, we will practice a fire drill. This practice drill will be fully explained to the children at the beginning of the year so that they will understand that our practice fire drills are **only** a practice, and why we are required to do them.

The Thompson Nicola Regional Health Board childcare licensing facilities requires us to have a completed health form for each child on file. This is a requirement before each child can attend preschool. **Please contact the school immediately if your child contracts a contagious disease.** Parents will be notified of any contagious diseases affecting children in preschool. A child with a communicable disease will not be re- admitted into class until the period of contagion is over or until they are well again.

Accident or Illness

In the event of a serious accident or illness, the parents will be contacted immediately. If the parent is not available, the emergency contact person will be notified.

All staff are first aid certified, but if emergency care is needed, we will seek emergency aid for your child.

Your child will be released only to those persons who have been listed on the pick up authorization form.

Releasing a Child from Preschool

Your child will be released only to those persons who have been listed on the pick up authorization form.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected with regards to all children's developmental information, and information about families, etc.

Fees

We require cash or post-dated cheques, dated for the 1st of each month (September through June) upon registration. Make up days will not be available for holidays and/or sick days.

Withdrawal

The school requires a written notice of one month if your child is to be withdrawn from the program. (Post-dated cheques will be returned at the time).

Thank you for choosing the Aberdeen Hills Montessori Preschool/Kindergarten for your child. We strive to offer your child excellence in Montessori Education. We look forward to getting to know child and to making your child's preschool experience a positive one, full of learning and fun.

Holly, Megan and Erin.