

Our Children's Center



MONTESSORI

Parent Handbook

411 S. Burrowes Street
State College, PA 16801
814-237-1585

e-mail: occmontessori@gmail.com
www.occmontessori.org

The mission of Our Children's Center is to educate children in a dynamic, warm, engaging, responsive, multi-cultural environment designed both to stimulate and to nurture them; to support and fairly compensate a highly- skilled professional staff; to promote and maintain a diverse student and staff population; and to foster a strong sense of community among families.

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About Our Children's Center

Our Children's Center (OCC) is a private, non-profit Montessori preschool and kindergarten. We welcome families from diverse religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Located in downtown State College, OCC offers a variety of educational programs with flexible options for children ages 13 months to 6 years of age.

Montessori education uses a "whole child" approach, and activities are designed to promote social skills, emotional and cognitive growth, and physical coordination. Teachers prepare the classroom environment so that the activities presented are attractive to children, developmentally appropriate, multi-sensorial, and self-correcting.

Most of the learning is self-directed. Respect for self, others, and the environment is a core Montessori principle. The goal of the Montessori educational philosophy is to develop autonomous, competent, empathetic, responsible problem-solvers who will make a positive impact on the world one day.

The OCC Board of Directors employs an Executive Director and a Head of School to organize and supervise the school's programs. Tricia Cossick is the school's Executive Director, charged with ensuring the smooth day-to-day functioning of the school, student admissions, staff development plans according to PA state regulations, grant writing, and creating systems for continuous quality improvement.

Kassie Holloway, the Head of School, teaches Montessori sessions, supervises Montessori staff, oversees students' progress, and plans the school's Montessori educational program. Our parent Board of Directors oversees the school's budget and ensures that the school's goals and programs are aligned with our mission.

"If we could say, 'We are respectful and courteous in our dealing with children--we treat them as we should like to be treated ourselves,' we should have mastered a great educational principle and be setting an example of a good education."

~Maria Montessori

Welcome from the Head of School and the Executive Director

Welcome to Our Children's Center.

Your child and, indeed, your entire family are part of a special early childhood education program: a school committed to the positive development of children, parents, and staff. Our Children's Center is a community-centered school whose mission is to offer the highest quality Montessori education for all children.

We aim to enroll not only a child but the family. We hope that you will take advantage of the school's social events. Parental participation is a vital component of our program. We firmly believe that we can't educate your child without you. Your involvement enriches the OCC's community, and we hope this community will enrich your life as well.

Let us begin the year together with excitement and anticipation. Children are our source of inspiration, awe, and wonder. We hope this will be true for you.

Sincerely,

Tricia Cossick, Executive Director
Kassie Holloway, Head of School

Non-Discrimination Policy

Admissions, the provisions of services, and referrals of clients shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, or sex.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign, the provision of aides, and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any individual/client/student (and/or their guardian), who believes they have been discriminated against, may file a complaint of discrimination with the following:

Department of Public Welfare
Bureau of Equal Opportunity
Room 223, Health & Welfare Building
PO Box 2675
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Our Children's Center

Mission Statement

The mission of Our Children's Center is to educate children in a dynamic, warm, engaging, responsive, multi-cultural environment designed both to stimulate and to nurture them; to support and fairly compensate a highly skilled professional staff; to promote and maintain a diverse student and staff population; and to foster a strong sense of community among families.

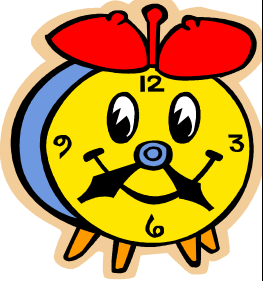
To support this mission, Our Children's Center will:

- Fund scholarships that create educational opportunities for Montessori-minded families with financial need;
- Support Montessori teachers by providing appropriate materials and facilities in the service of creating a thoughtfully prepared environment for the children;
- Encourage an interconnected network of learning opportunities among students, staff, and parents by offering parenting workshops, avenues for professional development, and ways for community members to share their expertise with our students;
- Develop and maintain a climate of grace and courtesy, kinship, and respect among students and the adults who educate them;
- Facilitate relationships among families through regular written and oral communication between school and home, service projects, volunteer and leadership opportunities, support and interest groups, and social events;
- Showcase the strengths of the Montessori philosophy of early childhood education by exemplifying the tenets of the philosophy in practice.

*OCC Address
& Phone*

Our Children's Center Montessori
411 South Burrowes Street
State College, PA 16801
Phone: 814-237-1585
Fax: 814-237-0707

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| <p><i>Website & E-Mail</i></p> | <p>www.occmontessori.org occmontessori@gmail.com</p> |
| <p><i>OCC Hours</i></p> | <p>Our Children’s Center opens for before-school care at 7:45 a.m. and closes the after-school program at 5:30 p.m.</p> |
| <p><i>Entrances</i></p> | <p>Please use the Burrowes Street courtyard door for drop-off and pick-up. Curbside drop-off begins at 8:50 a.m. and ends promptly at 9:05 a.m. The curbside door is located on Robin Alley. (See Page 8 for more details)</p> |
| <p><i>Calling us</i></p> | <p>The OCC office is staffed between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5 p.m. Please note, however, that our jobs take us to all parts of the building, and we may not be in the office to answer all questions. Please write a note in the office log book or leave a voicemail message; messages are checked frequently.</p> |
| <p><i>Messages for Teachers</i></p> | <p>We realize that you may have an important message to convey to the staff when you drop-off your child (e.g., someone else is picking him up; he will be staying late or for lunch, etc.).</p> <p>Please write such messages in the log book on the brown table near the mailboxes or leave a phone message. Verbal instructions can easily be forgotten during the busy morning entry time.</p> |
| <p><i>Student Absences</i></p> | <p>Please call the office by 9:00 a.m. if your child will be absent that day. Please give the reason for the absence so that we may record it in our illness tracking log.</p> <p>If you know in advance that your child will not be at school on a particular day, please write a note in the log book by the entrance. This includes vacation time.</p> |

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| <p><i>Drop-off</i></p>  | <p>It is important that your child be on time for her session. Young children are comforted by regular routines. The familiarity of predictable rhythms and routines helps them to feel secure in the environment. Please keep in mind that arrival time is our first chance in the day to make contact with each child.</p> <p>We regard this initial greeting and orientation time as highly important; it can set the tone for the rest of the day. Consistently arriving late, when all the children are already busy working or already in circle, can be anxiety-producing for some children.</p> |
| <p><i>Why Say Goodbye at the Door?</i></p> | <p>Saying “Goodbye” to your child at the door of the classroom is sometimes hard for your child and for you. You may be tempted to follow your child into the classroom to say goodbye; this practice, however, may make your child feel less secure and lengthen the time it takes him or her to settle into the classroom.</p> <p>We encourage you to say a brief farewell at the classroom door (or curbside drop-off), modeling a cheerful attitude so that your child does not sense any ambivalence on your part. Sometimes, a child creates a small goodbye ritual, doing everything in the same order before entering the classroom. Keeping your goodbye ritual outside the classroom helps your child move into the classroom space and separate from you more easily.</p> <p>Alternatively, if your child wants to rush into the classroom with an “over-the-shoulder” goodbye, please accept that it may be the way he or she copes with the separation.</p> |
| <p><i>Visiting the Classroom</i></p> | <p>Even though we request a morning farewell at the door, this in no way implies that you are not welcome in the classroom. We encourage parent volunteers to become a part of our classroom communities.</p> <p>You may wish to read with children; help with special activities or art projects; or share with the children a special skill or area of interest of yours. Please contact the office if you have a special subject you would like to share with children; for example, in the past one of our parents from PSU’s Entomology department brought in insects to show to the children.</p> <p>We also hope all parents will visit the classroom at some point in the school year to see how a Montessori classroom works. Please schedule these visits with the teacher or office staff.</p> |

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| <p><i>Classroom Assignment</i></p> | <p>Preschool children are assigned to a classroom with a Montessori-trained Head Teacher. They remain in their assigned a.m. classroom for the school year. Placement may change at the discretion of the Head of School. If a room change is needed, parents will be informed in writing. Pre-Three students will remain in the Pre-Three program until they are ready to move to a preschool room. This will depend on the child's readiness age, 5-day-attendance, and availability in one of the Montessori classrooms. If your child attends our "School Day" program, he or she may have a different teacher in the afternoon than in the morning.</p> <p>Please speak with the Executive Director or the Head of School if you have questions about your child's room assignment.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p><i>Daily Schedule</i></p> | <table border="0"> <tr> <td>7:45 - 8:50 a.m.</td> <td>Before-School Care</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8:50 - 9:05 a.m.</td> <td>Curbside Drop-Off</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8:50 - 11:30 a.m.</td> <td>Montessori Session</td> </tr> <tr> <td>~9:30 a.m.</td> <td>Circle Time</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11:10</td> <td>Outdoor play for 11:30 pickup</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11:30 a.m.</td> <td>Preschool children dismissed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11:45 - 1 p.m.</td> <td>Lunch and outdoor play</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 - 3:15 p.m.</td> <td>Montessori and nap/rest sessions</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3:15 p.m.</td> <td>School-Day children dismissed</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>After-School Session begins</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5:30 p.m.</td> <td>After-School Session ends</td> </tr> </table> <p>Check outside your child's classroom for schedules based on your child's program.</p> | 7:45 - 8:50 a.m. | Before-School Care | 8:50 - 9:05 a.m. | Curbside Drop-Off | 8:50 - 11:30 a.m. | Montessori Session | ~9:30 a.m. | Circle Time | 11:10 | Outdoor play for 11:30 pickup | 11:30 a.m. | Preschool children dismissed | 11:45 - 1 p.m. | Lunch and outdoor play | 1 - 3:15 p.m. | Montessori and nap/rest sessions | 3:15 p.m. | School-Day children dismissed | | After-School Session begins | 5:30 p.m. | After-School Session ends |
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| <p><i>Transition to Kindergarten</i></p> | <p>Each Fall, the Head of School and Director will host a Transition to Kindergarten meeting for parents of 4-year-olds to discuss the transition to Kindergarten, either at Our Children's Center, another private school, or public school.</p> <p>OCC may choose to admit children to Kindergarten as early as 4 years 10 months, who have attended a Montessori program for two years.</p> <p>If you choose to attend Kindergarten at Our Children's Center, your child's Kindergarten records are requested through the School District Office and sent to the school where they will attend 1st grade. If you choose to attend another school for the kindergarten year, your child's preschool records are sent by parent request.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| <p><i>Curb Drop-</i></p> | <p>We recognize that though there are many advantages to our down-town location, sometimes parking can be problematic. To help parents during the busy morning rush, we offer a Curbside Drop-Off service for those parents and children who are comfortable with a quick goodbye.</p> |
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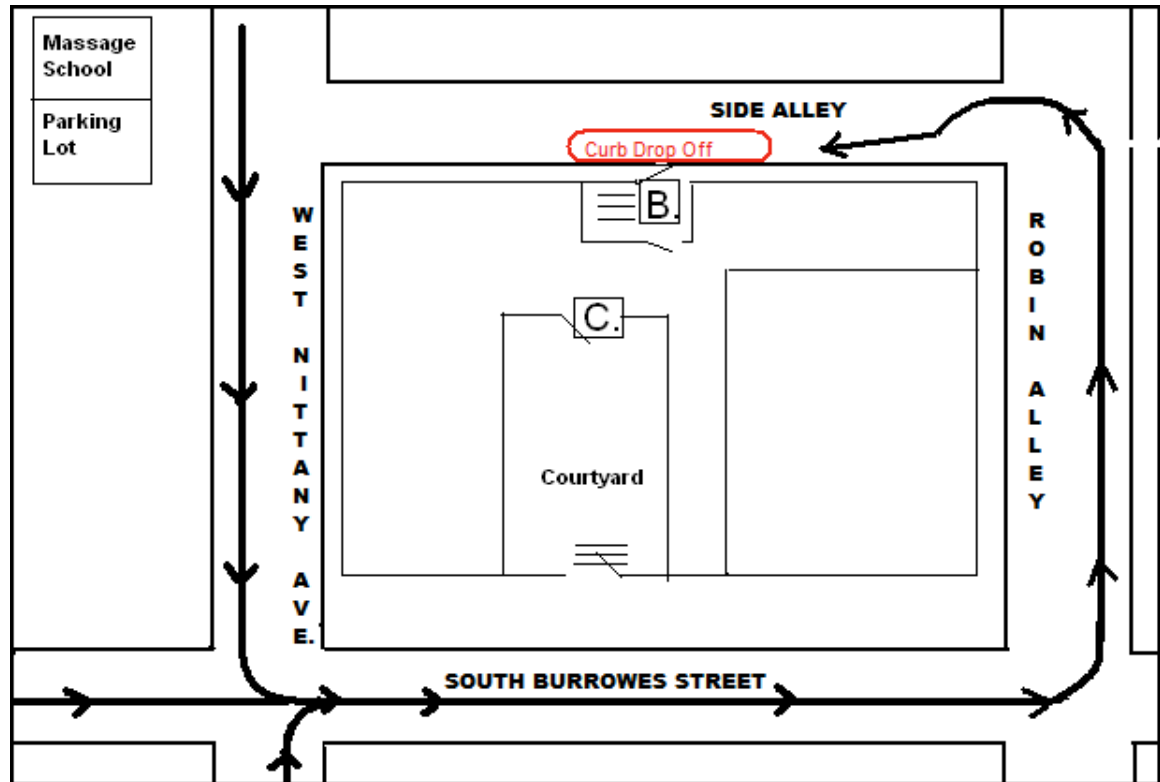
Please see the map below for the location of the curbside drop-off point and preferred route directions. If everyone follows the same procedures, we expect morning drop-off to work smoothly without affecting the Kindergartners getting off the school buses on Nittany Avenue.

Teachers will be at the side alley door in order to escort your child safely from your vehicle into school.

CURBSIDE DROP-OFF TIME IS 8:50 – 9:05 AM

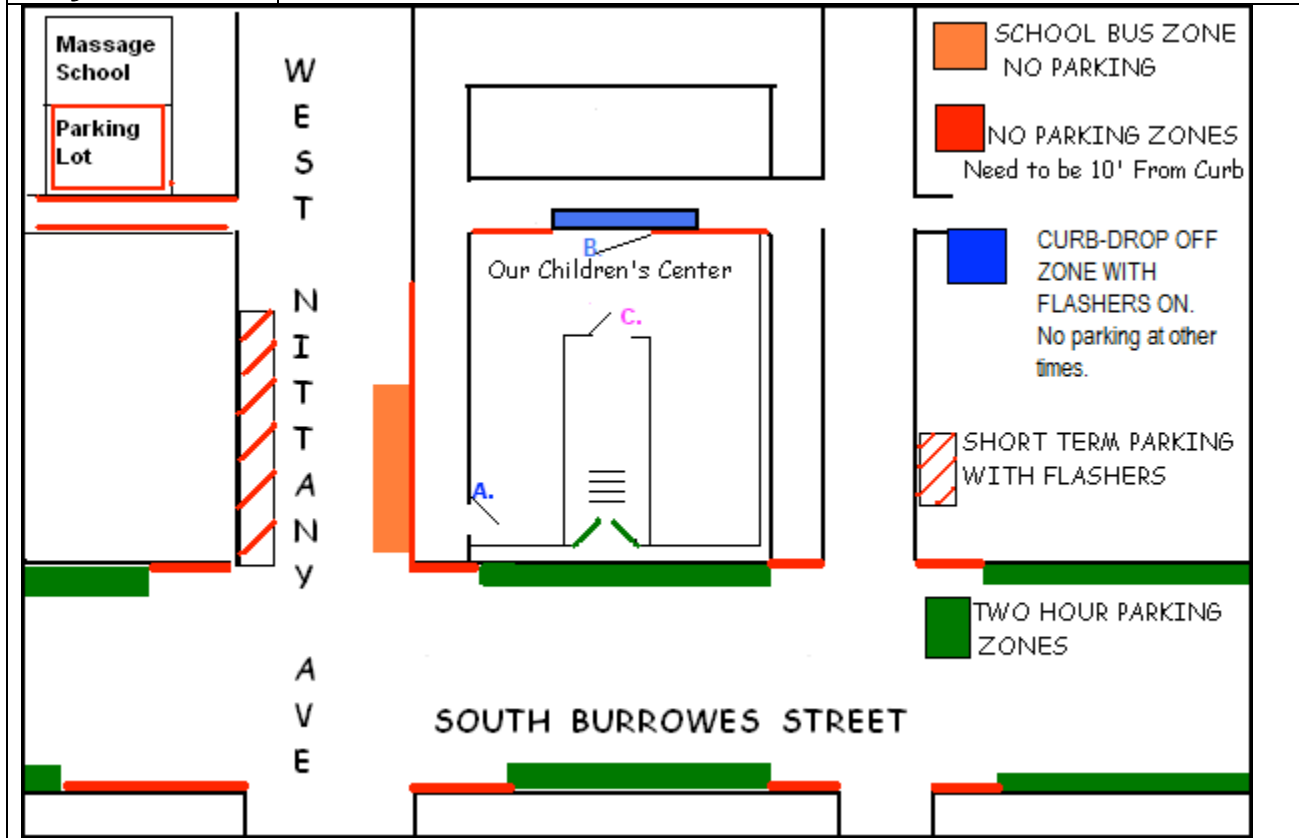
If you miss the drop-off time, please park in one of the 2-hour parking zones on South Burrowes and walk your child into school via the courtyard door.

CURB DROP OFF MAP WITH PREFERRED ROUTE




Parking Map

Please note the available parking locations on the map below. The streets are regularly patrolled, and unfortunately, if the parking patrol feels you are parked illegally, you will be ticketed.




New Family Meeting Q and A


Within the first few weeks of school, OCC will host a New Family Orientation meeting. At this time, the staff will be available to explain procedures, policies, the parent handbook, billing questions, special events and any other topics as requested by the group.

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| <p><i>Extra Hours Fees</i></p> | <table> <tr> <td>Lunch (for half day friends</td> <td>\$ 10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Early Care (7:45 - 8:50 a.m.)</td> <td>\$ 10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extra Session</td> <td>\$ 25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Afterschool Care</td> <td>\$ 20</td> </tr> </table> | Lunch (for half day friends | \$ 10 | Early Care (7:45 - 8:50 a.m.) | \$ 10 | Extra Session | \$ 25 | Afterschool Care | \$ 20 |
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| Afterschool Care | \$ 20 | | | | | | | | |
| <p><i>Pick-up</i></p> | <p>It is also important that your child be picked up on time. It can be a frightening experience for a small child to be left at the school after the routine departure time. She may believe that she has been forgotten.</p> <p>If an unexpected situation arises such that you cannot pick up your child on-time, please notify us so we can explain to your child why you are late.</p> | | | | | | | | |
| <p><i>Late Fees</i></p> | <p>Late pick-up fees are \$5 per 30 minutes before 5:30 p.m. and \$10/per 5 minutes after 5:30 p.m.</p> | | | | | | | | |
| <p><i>No Toys Please ☺</i></p> | <p>We ask that children not bring toys to school as they often become the source of confusion and heartache in the classroom. Please explain to your child that some things are for school and some things are just for home.</p> <p>We will reinforce this explanation. Special toy-sharing days are scheduled throughout the year. No toy weapons or toys with attached weapons are allowed at school.</p> | | | | | | | | |
| <p><i>Peanut and Tree-Nut Policy</i></p>  | <p>Please note we are a PEANUT AND TREE-NUT-FREE school. An understanding of peanut/tree-nut allergies is essential to the health and safety of the children attending OCC.</p> <p>In some cases, peanut allergies are so severe that a child can react to peanuts when airborne, as well as when they come into contact with skin.</p> <p>Please do not bring lunches or snacks that contain peanuts, peanut butter or tree-nuts (almonds, walnuts, etc.).</p> <p>As an added safety precaution, when your children enter the classroom each morning, children will be asked to wash hands and faces at the sink.</p> <p>It is touching to see how the children readily accept this policy and come to feel a sense of protection for their allergic friends.</p> | | | | | | | | |


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| <i>Examples of Healthy Snacks with serving sizes</i> | Muffins | 1 small "mini size" or ½ large |
| | Graham crackers with raisins | 2 (2 ½") squares with tbsp raisins |
| | Crackers with mini-carrots | 5 pieces with 2-3 carrots |
| | Bagels with cream cheese* | ¼ bagel |
| | Whole wheat bread and apple butter* | ½ slice of bread |
| | Apples, oranges, or pears w/ cheese cubes | 2-3 fruit sections w/ 2 pieces cheese |
| | Grapes | 1 stem section with ~6-8 grapes |
| | Banana | ½ banana |
| | Breads (carrot, pumpkin, etc.) | 1 slice |
| | Celery w/ cream cheese* | 2-3 pieces |
| | *To promote practical life skills, the children will apply the spreads. | |
| <i>Snacks</i> | <p>Nutrition education is an integral part of the daily program at Our Children's Center. Our goals include increasing children's acceptance of a wide variety of foods and promote good eating habits for optimal physical and mental development. Snack time provides an excellent opportunity for working toward these goals.</p> <p>OCC parents sign up to provide snack for the day. Children enjoy helping plan the snack and are happy to show the other children "their" snack. The snack sign-up calendar is located in the courtyard entrance by the sign-in book.</p> <p>Sending in a snack for ~50 children need not be a major expense. Buying fruits and vegetable in season, alternating less expensive snacks with those requiring more expensive ingredients, and keeping appropriate portions for 3-6-year-olds in mind. For more info, please read the snack article on the website at www.occmontessori.org</p> | |
| <i>Snack Time</i> | <p>Each day, snack is set out near a table, designated as the snack table in the classroom. Children monitor their own hunger level to determine when they will have snack.</p> <p>In keeping with promoting healthy habits, water is available to drink with snack. Children with allergies will eat a snack provided from home (and eat at a separate table if contact allergies are an issue).</p> | |
| <i>Lunch Time</i> | <p>If your child brings lunch to school, please pack a nutritious lunch of foods they enjoy. Please send reasonable child-sized portions. Microwaves are available for heating up leftovers, often a nutritious choice for your child (and you will also know if they liked last night's dinner!). Please limit the number of items to 3-5 different foods. Sometimes too many choices cause confusion and children actually eat</p> | |

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|  | <p>less food.</p> <p>Please avoid pre-packaged lunch meals. In our experience, they are nutritionally inferior, they end up largely uneaten, and if microwaveable, they take longer to heat, so that your children may wait longer than the other children to eat their lunch.</p> <p>We try to encourage children to eat their entire lunches. We need to discard any opened and uneaten or partially-consumed foods in addition to any items that require refrigeration. If you have special concerns about how much your child is eating (or not), please put a note in the logbook or speak with the Executive Director.</p> |
| <p><i>Dessert Dilemma</i></p> | <p>Most of us enjoy occasional sweet treats; children are no exception. However, children often react much more strongly to sugar, artificial colorings and flavorings than do adults.</p> <p>Many children spend the entire lunch period negotiating when they can eat their sweet treat and rarely finish their healthy choices.</p> <p>If this becomes a recurring problem for an individual child, we may request that you take a short break from sending dessert.</p> |
| <p><i>Catered Lunches</i></p> | <p>OCC offers a catered lunch two days per week. Lunch includes an entrée (spaghetti, pizza, macaroni and cheese, sub sandwich with veggies, fruit, and milk. Price varies. Watch for more information in your mailbox.</p> |
| <p><i>Birthdays</i></p> | <p>Children are welcome to bring a special snack to share with their classroom on their birthday. We would prefer you choose a less sweet alternative to cupcakes, like muffins or a special in-season fruit like berries. Half-day and napping children will share their special snack in the morning; all others will celebrate in the afternoon.</p> <p>We honor the birthday child through a special ceremony during circle time. The birthday child walks around a candle (the "sun") carrying a globe, for one rotation for each year he/she has been on Earth. As the child walks, we tell the story of his or her journey. This ceremony is optional. Children with summer birthdays can select another day for their celebration.</p> <p>We appreciate that birthdays are not celebrated in all religious traditions. If you would prefer that your child not participate in a birthday celebration, please inform us.</p> |
| <p><i>Pre-Three</i></p> | <p>Our Children's Center offers a Pre-Three for children younger than three and not yet able to be in our preschool classrooms. Many younger siblings of current students are excited about "going to school, too." Please see the Executive Director for more information and/or registration forms.</p> |

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| <p><i>Napping and Resting</i></p> | <p>The determination as to which children are "nappers" is generally made by parents and teachers together, based on the age of the child, the child's schedule, and observations of the child's behavior. Please keep in mind that many children who have "outgrown" their naps at home still require rest when at school, as school tends to be a more stimulating place than home.</p> <p>If your child will be napping or resting, please provide a blanket, sheet, and pillow. These items should be labeled and put in a cloth bag or pillowcase. Your child may bring a special stuffed toy or blanket from home to cuddle during nap time. (Don't send in a favorite toy used at bedtime, just in case it is left at school!) All nap items go home on Fridays for laundering.</p> <p>Children who are "resters" but not sleepers will be able get up after a designated period of time and engage in quiet play until the majority of children are awake.</p> |
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| <p><i>Labeled Clothing</i></p> | <p>Please send your child to school in comfortable, easy-to-manage, and “OK to get dirty” clothing. Children sit on the floor, spill paint, and work in the sand or dirt routinely. Clothing should encourage children to actively participate in all aspects of the program rather than inhibiting them.</p> <p>At the beginning of the year, please send in a labeled spare set of clothes, including socks and underwear. These will be placed in a bin labeled with your child’s name, in case of spills or bathroom accidents.</p> <p>Please check your child’s bin periodically to make sure the clothing is seasonally appropriate and to make sure it still fits (children grow so quickly!).</p> |
| <p><i>Appropriate Shoes</i></p> | <p>Footwear should be comfortable and sturdy. For your child’s safety, we strongly recommend sneakers as the safest footwear for active play. Children trip easily in sandals and dress shoes, and boots are slippery on linoleum floors.</p> <p>We discourage flip-flops, crocs, or other types of loose-fitting footwear. These are inappropriate items because they hinder active play and may be hazardous on stairs. Children will wear footwear at all times in accordance with Department of Health and Welfare regulations.</p> |
| <p><i>Daily Walks</i></p> | <p>Each day the children spend some time outdoors, weather permitting. Younger children play in the play yard adjacent to the school or take walks around the block. Children walk with a partner; usually a younger child is paired with an older child or teacher as he or she learns about this new experience.</p> <p>Older children go for walks in the neighborhood (also walking with partners), or play at Central Parklet or in the play yard.</p> |
| <p><i>Indoor Play</i></p>  | <p>During all inclement weather, the All-Purpose Room is set up as an indoor play area with gross-motor activities supervised by teachers.</p> <p>We have climbers, scooters, and many other fun activities for the children to use to get exercise and use some of their boundless energy!</p> |

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| <p><i>Field Trips</i></p> | <p>As part of our educational program, we occasionally take groups of children on excursions into the community. The opportunity to go on field trips depends upon each child's age, level of maturity, and interests. We view the three-year cycle as a continuum & plan field trips accordingly.</p> <p>Younger children need to focus on "the basics" of familiarity with routines, materials, teachers, and expectations; hence, they may go on only one field trip, perhaps to a park. Older, more mature children usually have these basics under their belts and are ready and eager for more frequent and diverse community experiences.</p> |
| <p><i>Field Trip Transportation</i></p> | <p>Our ability to take children on field trips depends upon parental involvement. Specifically, we need parents to help transport and supervise the children.</p> <p>Field trip drivers are required to submit a current driver's license and proof of insurance to the office prior to departure. A record of this information will be maintained in the office.</p> |
| <p><i>Winter Clothing</i></p> | <p>During the winter, we take the children outside on days when the temperature is above 15°F (this includes the wind chill factor). OCC uses the NOAA website in order to make the decision about going outside to play or if stay indoors.</p> <p>Please send your child to school with the following labeled items: winter coat, hat, gloves or mittens, sturdy walking shoes or warm snow boots, (not rain boots) and try to have him or her wear warm pants. If your child does not want to wear pants, please send in a pair of sweatpants to wear over tights, leggings, or lightweight pants.</p> |
| <p><i>Winter Weather Closings</i></p> | <p>We follow the SCASD when deciding to cancel school because of snow or icy roads. OCC is open on time when SCASD calls for a two-hour delay due to inclement weather.</p> <p>The Kindergarten buses, however, will follow State College Area School District's two-hour delay, when there is one.</p> |
| <p><i>Keeping the Lines of Communication Open</i></p> | <p>The importance of communication and understanding between teachers and parents cannot be overemphasized, each sees the child in a different setting and at different times of the day and consequently sees different facets of his/her personality. Knowing about changes (e.g., moving, new baby, grandparents visiting) can greatly help us in understanding changes in the child's behavior and attitudes in school.</p> <p>While we are strongly of the mindset that the staff should be open and available for parent-teacher communications, sometime such communications during the school day can be difficult.</p> <p>If you would like feedback on how your child is doing, or simply have some questions, feel free to speak with the Executive Director or leave a message in the appropriate teacher's mailbox. Teachers' mailboxes are located just right inside the door of the school office.</p> |

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| <p><i>Conferences</i></p> | <p>Parent-teacher conferences are available for all parents several times each year, with additional conferences when needed. Please see the current school calendar for scheduled conference days. Parents sign-up for a conference time. Child care will be available for your child during conferences.</p> <p>If you have concerns that you would like to share about your child before your conference time, please drop a note in Miss Kassie's mailbox. If you would like to arrange for a conference in addition to your regularly scheduled conferences, please contact the Executive Director.</p> |
| <p><i>Progress Reports</i></p> | <p>Written progress reports for each child are sent home throughout the year. These offer an additional source of detailed information regarding your child's progress and overall development.</p> |
| <p><i>Self-Direction</i></p>  | <p>At OCC, we encourage children to become self-sufficient in many ways. From remembering to put away a work before getting out another work, to helping clean up a spill, to learning ways to tell another child that he or she wishes to work alone, every day provides countless opportunities for your child to gain independence at an appropriate level. You may be surprised at the many activities your child will start to do at home after attending OCC for a time.</p> |
| <p><i>“Any child who is self-sufficient, who can tie his shoes and dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity which is derived from a sense of independence.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>~Maria</i></p> <p><i>Montessori</i></p> | |
| <p><i>The Rules at School</i></p> | <p>The rules at school help children become independent in the environment and aid in the development of the school as a peaceful community.</p> <p>We list the basic ground rules below to enhance parental awareness of our goals at Our Children's Center. Please reinforce these rules when in your child's company at school. Additionally, be aware that many of the ground rules apply to everyone, including adults.</p> <p>The following are the general ground rules at Our Children's Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use quiet walking feet. • Use an inside voice inside the school. • Touch another child's work when invited. • Work together with another child when invited. • Keep hands to your own body. • Play with different friends each day. • Wash hands when asked by a teacher. • Take care of the materials. • Put work away when finished so it's ready for the next person. • Interrupt politely (when necessary) by gently placing a hand on a teacher's shoulder and waiting for eye contact. |

*Guidelines for
Wednesday
Sharing Day*


Sharing day has become a favorite tradition at OCC, and provides a wonderful opportunity for the children to develop expressive language, learn to be respectful of others, and extend their focus and attention as we take turns sharing our items, ideas, hopes and dreams.


We would like to explain the sharing day guidelines so we can all make sharing day a positive experience for all. Montessori philosophy encourages us to learn together, to respect the earth, appreciate each person's uniqueness, and develop our community by getting to know more about each other.

Children may share:

1. Something from nature
2. Something hand made
3. A treasured item representing a trip or vacation
4. A picture of someone in their family or your child doing something special.
5. A work of art they really like.

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| <p><i>Statement on Discipline</i></p> | <p>Our Children's Center has a strong commitment to implementing discipline of students in a respectful, firm, and encouraging manner. It is our long-term goal to help children learn to be self-disciplined rather than merely monitored by adults.</p> <p>The OCC Staff Manual states that "No corporal punishment is ever to be implemented at school" (e.g., hitting, spanking, pushing, etc.). In addition, no psychological or humiliating punishment is ever to be implemented at school (e.g., denial of snack or lunch, threats of physical punishment, name-calling, intimidation, etc.).</p> <p>Children who present behavior problems are discussed at staff meetings and with the Head of School and Executive Director. Appropriate remedial strategies are based on systematic observation of the child and communication among staff and with parents.</p> <p>Short-term solutions in the classroom may include the child staying only with a teacher for the remainder of a session or moving to a quiet place in the room to calm down.</p> <p>The establishment of clear limits and consistency in maintaining these limits goes a long way toward preventing problems from occurring and toward supporting the child's development of self-discipline.</p> |
| <p><i>Incident Report</i></p> | <p>If your child harms another child at school, you will receive a copy of an incident report detailing the nature of the injury, how it occurred, and which staff members were present at the time. The original is kept in your child's file. You will be contacted by the Executive Director or Head of School.</p> <p>The injured child will receive an accident report (which does not mention your child's name).</p> |
| <p><i>Emergency Contact Information</i></p> | <p>At the beginning of the school year, or when your child enrolls, you will complete an Emergency Contact card. This is kept in the office so we can reach you in case your child feels ill. We take copies on field trips and to the playground.</p> <p>Please make sure your emergency contact information is current at all times. Please notify us of changes in home, work, or cell phone numbers, physicians, or emergency contact individuals as soon as such changes occur. Office staff will check with you every six months insure your information is current.</p> |

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| <p><i>Health Assessments</i></p> | <p>All children enrolled at Our Children's Center are required to have an age-appropriate Health Assessment completed by their physician. This report must be submitted within 60 days of initial enrollment and updated yearly.</p> <p>Staff members are also required to submit a physician's completed Health Assessment upon employment and every other year, thereafter.</p> |
| <p><i>Illness - Onset at Home</i></p>  | <p>Your child's health is very important to us. Please call the office to let us know when your child is going to be absent due to illness. Please keep your child at home until he or she is symptom-free without medication for at least 24 hours.</p> <p>This 24-hour period ensures that your child is fully recovered and not contagious before returning to school. A good rule of thumb is that if your child is not well enough to participate fully in the day's activities (<u>and these include outside play</u>), he/she should stay at home.</p> <p>When you call the school to inform us of an absence, or when you receive a diagnosis for your child, please tell us or leave a voicemail message about your child's symptoms and/or illness. We track illnesses in a log at school. If your child has a contagious illness, we will post a notice to inform parents that there is a child in the school who has a particular illness (without revealing your child's name), so that other parents can watch for signs and symptoms in their own children.</p> |
| <p><i>Illness - Onset at School</i></p> | <p>If your child becomes ill at OCC, we will call you to arrange for immediate pick-up. If we cannot reach you, we will call the individuals listed on your emergency card. We will keep your child in the office under staff supervision, until you arrive.</p> <p>We will call you if your child has one or more of these symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A temperature of 100.5 degrees or more • A temperature below 100.5 with behavior changes • Vomiting or diarrhea • An unexplained rash • Symptoms of a communicable disease • Unusual or persistent drowsiness • Unusual and persistent behavior change • Wheezing or difficulty breathing • Evidence of head lice or discovery of a deer-tick bite |

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| <p><i>Illness- Online Resource</i></p> | <p>A helpful online source that lists common childhood illnesses and their symptoms is at www.familydoctor.org or www.webmd.com</p> |
| <p><i>Medications</i></p> | <p>If your child's doctor prescribes medication that must be administered during the school day, please give the medication to the Executive Director or Office Manager along with written instructions as to the required dosage and time of administration.</p> <p>Please note that the medication must be brought to school in its original labeled container. The physician's written instructions must be current and apply to the child who is in our care (rather than a sibling, for example) in order for us to administer medication.</p> <p>We can occasionally accept responsibility for the administration of over-the-counter medicine at the discretion of the Executive Director. Detailed instructions should be provided along with the medicine, and it must be left with the Executive Director.</p> <p>Never send any medicine in your child's lunchbox or backpack, even if he or she rides the Kindergarten bus.</p> |
| <p><i>Injuries at School</i></p>  | <p>If your child receives a minor injury at school, we will wash it, bandage it, apply ice to it, etc., as the case requires.</p> <p>If an injury is of a more serious nature or seems to warrant medical attention, we will contact you immediately.</p> <p>In an emergency situation, we will arrange for emergency transport of your child to Mount Nittany Medical Center.</p> |
| <p><i>Accident Report</i></p> | <p>If your child has sustained an injury during the day, you will receive a brief written accident report detailing the nature of the injury, how it occurred, and which staff members were present. The Executive Director or Head teacher will also attempt to get in touch with you to explain the accident.</p> <p>The original is kept in your child's file. If you have any questions about the injury, please discuss them with the Executive Director or Head of School.</p> |

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| <p><i>Emergency Plan</i></p> | <p>Our Children’s Center, as a Pennsylvania-licensed child-care facility is under the supervision of the Department of Public Welfare.</p> <p>Every year the DPW inspects our school and assists us in making OCC a safer place for your child. Action items can be small; for example, adding lids to the bathroom wastebaskets, or more substantial, such as reviewing our Emergency Plan for the school.</p> <p>Yearly, you will receive a letter with the details of our Emergency Plan including our site’s emergency evacuation location. Every year, you will be asked to update your emergency designates, the people who are authorized to pick up your child during an Emergency situation.</p> |
| <p><i>Getting to Know Your Child</i></p> | <p>We will ask you to complete a Parent Interview Form at the beginning of the year so that we can learn about your child and your family. Also, if your child has an IEP or IFSP evaluation, please give a copy to the Executive Director upon entry to the school.</p> <p>During the school year, you are the best person to tell us about your child. Please help us by keeping us informed about any special situations in your family that might impact your child’s day.</p> <p>You may write notes for the teachers in the logbook (e.g., if your child had nightmares or a poor night’s sleep), or you may set up a time to speak with the Director or Head of School about other special concerns.</p> |
| <p><i>Toilet Learning</i></p> | <p>In toileting, as in all aspects of daily living, we encourage children's natural progression toward independence. Independence occurs in stages if the child receives appropriate support and practice along the way.</p> <p>OCC teachers and staff help the children as needed, by changing diapers and pull-ups, helping them to use the toilet, and wiping. We also gently encourage children to move towards independence in this area.</p> <p>Our expectation is that parents will work with us to support their child's growth toward independence in toileting. There is a bathroom in the downstairs classroom. Children in the upstairs classrooms are always supervised when they use the bathrooms.</p> |

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| <p><i>Tuition Monthly Statements</i></p> | <p>Statements are sent out around the 25th of the month. The statement serves as your invoice and your receipt, for the previous month's payment, for taxes, or for reimbursements.</p> <p>Our Children's Center's Tax Id # is 25-1815148 also in the upper left-hand corner of the monthly statement.</p> <p>When you make a payment, it will show up on your statement with the date and check number. If you have any questions regarding your tuition, please contact Miss Jen, our Office Manager at 814-237-1585.</p> |
| <p><i>Tuition Late Fee</i></p> | <p>Tuition is due on the first of the month. A 3% late fee will be added to the amount unpaid by the seventh day of the month. If you are having financial difficulties and are unable to meet this obligation, please speak with the Executive Director. All such information will be held in strictest confidence.</p> |
| <p><i>Schedule Change</i></p> | <p>Any request for a change in your child's schedule must be submitted in written form and be approved by the Executive Director. There is a \$25 fee for a change which requires both a new and <u>reduced</u> tuition amount.</p> |
| <p><i>Withdrawal (Parent- Requested)</i></p> | <p>If the withdrawal of a child is necessary for any reason, his or her parents shall agree to provide OCC with two full months' written notice of such; otherwise, two months' tuition will be forfeited.</p> <p>Under special circumstances and at the discretion of the Executive Director, withdrawal requests due to a job transfer may be negotiated. If the date of a child's withdrawal on or after March 1st, the remainder of the year's tuition is due.</p> |
| <p><i>Withdrawal (OCC- Requested)</i></p> | <p>Rarely, the Executive Director and Head of School, after much thought and discussion with a family, may determine that OCC does not best suit the needs of a particular child and/or the school community. Parents will be given two weeks' notice to find alternative care.</p> <p>The Executive Director and Head of School will assist the parents, as best they can, in finding a more suitable location for their child and/or refer the family to other resources or agencies for assistance.</p> |

Financial Aid

We offer scholarships and work-study positions as the two types of financial aid. The amount of scholarship funds Available scholarship funding varies each year depending on fundraising efforts, budgetary allowance, and the number of requests received.

The Financial Committee presents a financial aid budget to the Board of Directors for a vote. All scholarship information is confidential. Only the Executive Director and Office Manager will have knowledge of financial application information. Funding is based on need, commitment to the Montessori philosophy, and service to the school.

Scholarships are based on the funds available and family need. Full scholarships are offered only to families whose income is less than 25% of the median family income for Centre County. Any family receiving a scholarship, full or partial will be required to pay at least \$50.00 per month in addition to serving on a school committee.

Work-study awards are based on the funds available, school need, and family need. The work-study program is designed to be an in-kind exchange with families that mutually benefits the school by reducing expenses. Work-study funds are linked to costs associated with school expenses.

Three types of work-study funding may be available depending on OCC's current needs: cleaning, office support and classroom support.

All scholarship and work-study funding is dependent upon availability of funds. Scholarship and work-study is not guaranteed for more than one academic year. Families must reapply each year. Prior recipients receive higher priority; however, funding is not guaranteed. Please see the Executive Director to obtain more information.

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| <p><i>Summer School</i></p> | <p>Each summer, we offer eight to 10 weeks of programming, with slightly reduced hours - 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Several weeks in June are available for those families who need summer childcare. The Montessori summer weeks begin later and are announced in May. OCC is closed for one week in August so teachers can prepare the classrooms for the new school year.</p> <p>Half-Day and Full-Day schedules are available. Drop-in care may be available and is dependant on staff availability.</p> <p>We encourage new families to enroll their child in OCC's summer session for at least two or three weeks. Children assimilate so much faster in the fall went they have an opportunity to be in the Montessori summer classroom environment. New children may attend Summer Session beginning the first week in July.</p> <p>Admission of OCC alumni and siblings is at the discretion of the Executive Director and Head of School. Summer registration begins in May.</p> |
| <p><i>Summer Clothing</i></p> | <p>Good walking shoes are a priority because we often go outside for walks the nice weather. Sunscreen, personal water bottles, and hats are recommended.</p> <p>Please be sure summer clothing fits properly; children are very uncomfortable when clothing is tight and the weather is warm.</p> |

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| <i>OCC Facts</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintains a quality early-learning program with a private school academic license from the PA Department of Education• Funds several financial aid programs in order to ensure a more economically diverse student population• Offers before- and after-school care as well as flexible scheduling to accommodate families' particular needs• Provides regular written and oral communication to families in order that both home and classroom learning best meets the needs of each child and the school• Hires and retains Montessori-trained teachers as well as classroom assistants with education-related degrees• These teachers "follow the child" when designing classroom learning environments and materials.• Children work through a sequenced curriculum and enriching environment guided by individual needs and interests. Through daily interactions within the school community, children mature, both socially and emotionally, at a natural pace.• Teachers teach and model for children how to express thoughts and emotions in caring and considerate ways. |
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| <p><i>Parents as Partners</i></p> | <p>Parent involvement is a core principle of our educational philosophy. A strong home-school connection increases knowledge and trust between both parties. When parents and teachers cooperate, children benefit cognitively as well as socially and emotionally. OCC becomes a nurturing community for all involved.</p> |
| <p><i>Services to Parents</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent-teacher conferences • Flexible part-time programs • Written progress reports • School newsletters/Website • Parent education workshops • Social events (holiday get-togethers, school picnics, etc.) • Open observation policy; Bring-a-Parent Night • Information about community resources and events • Referrals and auxiliary services to families (speech therapy referrals, vision screening, picture day, child-care options, and financial support for qualified families, etc.) |
| <p><i>Parent Support for the School</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation on committees • Support during volunteer work days • Support for fundraisers • Volunteers in classroom • Being a lunch helper and providing snack • Spreading public awareness of OCC's program • Parents as decision-makers (Board membership) |
| <p><i>Parent Volunteers</i></p> | <p>Parent volunteers are vital to OCC educational program. Your help allows us to continue to offer high-quality programs at the lowest possible cost. When you participate in fundraising events, bring in snack, serve on a committee or as a board member, wash a load of laundry, help in the classroom, or act as a lunch helper you become an important part of our support system for the teachers and the school as whole.</p> <p>We do not require parents to volunteer but if you are able to serve please share your time and talents with our children. Some parents have strong organizational skills and are comfortable acting as a chair of an event. Other parents have carpentry or mechanical skills and help out when something needs to be assembled or repaired. Sewing, graphic design, cooking, playing a musical instrument all enrich our community.</p> |

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| <p><i>Parent Committees</i></p> | <p>We have five parent committees focused on an area of need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development/Fundraising • Special School Events • Literacy Events/Library • Ambassador/Community Building • Building/Tech Support/Helping Hands <p>Committees may fluctuate depending on the school's needs in a particular year. We ask that each family be represented on at least one parent committee each school year. Parents will receive a committee preference form at the beginning of the year.</p> |
| <p><i>The American Montessori Society</i></p> | |
| <p>The American Montessori Society (AMS) has been the mainstay for Montessori education in the US since its inception in 1960. AMS has created national standards to help ensure the integrity of Montessori education; as an organization, it is helping to incorporate the Montessori approach into the framework of American education.</p> <p>Our Children's Center has been a fully affiliated School member of AMS since 1988. As a part of this membership, we are regularly observed by professional Montessori teachers as well as AMS consultants. We also serve as a qualified internship site for Montessori and other early-childhood training courses to facilitate certification.</p> | |

Montessori Philosophy

Respect is at the core of the Montessori philosophy -- respect for oneself, for others, for life, and for the environment. Ground rules and behavioral expectations for both children and adults in Montessori settings are based upon these tenets.

Specific educational practices common to most Montessori programs include multi-age groupings, beautiful and carefully designed learning environments, emphasis on teacher observation and research, a focus on the development of the "whole child", children's selection of materials from within an appropriate range, and clear social and behavioral expectations.

In all aspects of learning, children move at their own pace, repeating activities until a sense of inner mastery moves them on to the next level of difficulty. A rich array of hands-on materials is offered, engaging the child in learning on many levels.

- *Daily living activities*-- e.g., hand washing, sweeping, and sewing--develop children's hand-eye coordination, sense of sequence, and ability to remain with the entire cycle of an activity. Practical Life materials enable children to learn how to care for themselves and the environment.
- The *Sensorial* materials, a rich array of grading, sorting, and sensory discrimination activities, develop children's perceptual abilities and refine their observation skills.
- *Open-ended materials* -- blocks, sand, dramatic play, Legos, and art media -- encourage exploration and self-expression while allowing each child to impose his or her organizational style upon the process.
- *Literacy and numerical activities*, two other well-developed curriculum areas, permeate all aspects of classroom life. Science and cultural experiences enable the child to view the world's similarities and differences -- and to relish life on this planet.
- *Music and movement* offer the child vehicles for personal expression and joy. Throughout the school year, curriculum materials are continually revised and expanded in response to the children's changing needs and interests.

In order to design and facilitate learning in these highly individualized environments, Montessori teachers must be well prepared. They need a complete understanding of child development and the Montessori curriculum, as well as excellent observation and communication skills. On-going professional development is required of all staff and tailored to individual needs and interests.