

# **MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S SCHOOLHOUSE, INC.**

## **HISTORY**

Montessori Children's Schoolhouse was established in 1968 as a not-for-profit organization by a group of interested parents. These parents were dedicated to the ideals of the Montessori philosophy and recognized the need for an early learning experience for their own children. They believed that direct parental control of the school, with voluntary support and with a highly competent staff, was the best means of assuring a quality program.

In its first academic year (1968 - 1969), Montessori Children's Schoolhouse had an enrollment of 28 students in its preschool. Since that time, a toddler program, kindergarten program, before and after school program, and elementary program have been added. The school's enrollment now exceeds 150 students. MCS has been accredited by the American Montessori Society since 1990.

Our present location was purchased in 1984. The building, originally built in 1926 for Northern States Life Insurance Company, was declared a local historical landmark by the Common Council of the City of Hammond in 1985. Northern States Life Insurance Company was entered in the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

## **MISSION**

Montessori Children's Schoolhouse is a parent-owned school with a vision to develop independent, competent, and socially responsible children with an appreciation of learning and the ability to develop to their potential. Our mission is to use qualified staff, enriched Montessori environments, and parental involvement to develop the social, emotional and cognitive needs of our culturally diverse student enrollment.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Montessori Children's Schoolhouse was founded for the purpose of providing educational curriculum and facilities based upon the methods and educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. The Montessori philosophy recognizes that a child's early years are the most formative and that a child's ability to acquire knowledge is enhanced through the manipulation of concrete material. The carefully prepared environment is structured to meet the individual needs of each child, thus allowing children to progress at their own pace. The environment is prepared to address all aspects of the child's development. The Montessori curriculum, which interrelates basic, scientific, and cultural areas, is designed to provide materials and activities to furnish unlimited sources of discoveries and to offer constant challenges to be mastered. Our goal is to enable children not only to develop an appreciation of learning, but also to develop to their potential.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Montessori Children's Schoolhouse, Inc. admits students of any sex, race, color, national and ethnic origin to all of the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. MCS does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

The school does not discriminate against any student or parent with a cognitive, emotional, medical, physical, or social disability unless through individual assessment the enrollment of said student or parent would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others or would require a fundamental alteration of the philosophy or program of the school.

## **TEACHER CREDENTIALS**

### **American Montessori Society Credential**

A degree from an accredited four year college or equivalent foreign credential is required. No specific field of study is designated. American Montessori Society certification requires the successful completion of the training program and internship beyond the four year degree.

### **American Montessori Society Provisional and Associate Credential**

Some American Montessori Society approved programs accept a few non-degree candidates with exceptional qualifications. Upon successful completion of the course and internship, such candidates are eligible for AMS Provisional Credential or Associate Credential.

## **ORGANIZATION**

Montessori Children's Schoolhouse is a parent governed organization accredited by the American Montessori Society.

The Board of Directors governs the school and determines all policies, except those which are clearly academic. The principal/administrator and faculty are responsible to the Board for academic policies.

The Board is composed of nine directors. The parents and Board members nominate and elect new directors each year. Each director is elected for a two year term of office beginning July 1. The principal/administrator and lead teachers are ex-officio members of the Board of Directors.

Board meetings provide all parents with the opportunity to participate in the operation of the school. All parents are encouraged and invited to attend Board meetings. (Check the school calendar and bulletins for meeting dates.) The MCS mission, vision, and philosophy are reviewed at the Annual Meeting in October and the general Board of Directors meeting in November. The Annual Election meeting is held in April.

The functions of the Board are achieved through committees headed by Board members and composed of parents. The Board asks all parents to donate time during the school year to help carry out policies, programs, and events. The involvement of all parents is crucial to the continuing smooth operation of the school. Please feel free to contact any Board member at any time.

# SCHOOL POLICIES

**ABSENCE:** Please report your child's absence to the school office on the day of the absence. It is not necessary to repeat the call on subsequent days of the same illness.

Extended vacations during the school year are not encouraged. If such vacations are planned, notify the school office one week prior to the planned absence. Excessive absence and tardiness are not beneficial to the student's progress.

No reduction or credit in tuition is granted for absence.

**ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL:** During the school year, staff members escort students to and from cars at arrival and dismissal. If you are late at arrival or dismissal, you must park your car and enter the school through the main entrance. No student should enter or leave the school unescorted.

If picking up students from classroom or dismissal area, inform the directress that the child/children are leaving with you and stop at the MCS office to sign out your child/children.

If you are late at arrival, escort your child to the classroom and inform the directress of arrival. If you are late at dismissal, your child may be signed into the after school program and you will be billed accordingly. (See LATE FEES).

Several classrooms begin the day with presentations of new materials and important announcements. It is extremely important that you arrive at school on time in order for your child to benefit from this information.

Often students become anxious when parents are late. It is important that you give your child a sense of security by arriving on time at the end of your child's school day.

Early arrival and/or late dismissal is available for most of the students. Please contact the school office for information.

Procedures and times for arrival and dismissal are published at the beginning of the school year.

**BACKGROUND CHECK:** A state criminal history check is required yearly by our insurance agent for any parents who volunteer to chaperone and/or assist or work with students. Your original background check will be kept on file in the school office.

**BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM:** This before and after school program is open to students enrolled in the early childhood, kindergarten, and elementary programs. The program is available on a daily or part-time basis. It is recommended that students enroll for a minimum of two days per week in order to benefit socially from the program. Students must attend their regular class session in order to attend the after school program. Notify the school at morning arrival if your child is staying for the after school program.

**CHILD ABUSE:** The school shall implement procedures to insure that existing public laws regarding child abuse are followed.

**CLASSROOM PARTIES:** During the school year, your child's room parent will schedule your snack day to coincide with your child's birthday. The directresses encourage nutritious snacks and/or "special day" treats. Due to dietary restrictions, personal beliefs, and safety concerns, individual party favors or special holiday treats will not be sent home with the students.

Students often enjoy celebrating their birthday by donating a special book or CD to their classroom.

The room parent will also schedule a parent to provide an appropriate nutritious snack for special occasions such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, and Easter.

Party invitations and gifts will not be distributed at school. If you need an address, please contact the school office. Only kindergarten and elementary students will exchange Valentine cards with their classmates. Information regarding this exchange will be sent home with your child.

**CLASSROOM SNACKS:** Snacks for the classrooms are furnished by the parents. A snack calendar will be sent home monthly specifying when each student is responsible for refreshments for the class. Suggestions for nutritious snacks will be printed on the back of the snack calendar.

Please do not forget your scheduled snack day. If you do, please send in a non-perishable item for later use.

**CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE SCHOOL:** All notes, payments, messages, and other correspondence are to be delivered to the school office. The office staff will channel information to the appropriate person.

**CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE CLASSROOMS:** During classroom hours, the staff's primary responsibility is the children. Instructional time and observational time is valuable. The use of electronic communication devices are not permitted during class time or scheduled work hours unless authorized by the principal/administrator.

**DISCIPLINE:** Students are expected to show respect for themselves, each other, the environment and each adult with whom they associate within the school environment. This includes outside activities related to school functions.

Students are encouraged to discuss mutual problems. In the event that discipline is needed, a staff member will intervene in a firm, positive manner. Procedures include talking to the student, removing the student from the situation, re-directing the student to another activity, allowing the student to "take a break", and conferring with the parent/guardian. MCS staff will deal with inappropriate behavior within the school environment. The parent/guardian will be contacted if inappropriate behavior continues, or if behavior is detrimental to other students or to the functioning of the classroom. A student may be assigned to a different classroom only if the directress of record and/or the principal/administrator feel that reassignment is in the best interest of the students and/or classroom. Continued inappropriate behavior may lead to suspension or withdrawal. Corporal punishment is prohibited.

Any of the following unacceptable student behaviors on school property or at school sponsored events will result in immediate suspension and/or dismissal: arson, causing bodily harm to another, cheating, fighting, harassment, illegal activities, inappropriate behavior, obscenity, possessing disruptive items, profanity, sexual activities, theft, use of illegal drugs, and vandalism. This list is an example of categories of misbehavior and is not intended to be all-inclusive. If unacceptable behavior continues, the student will be expelled from school.

The primary concern of the staff and the school is the welfare of all students and the most appropriate placement for the child. The staff shall be available to confer with parent/guardian as needed and to assist parent/guardian in locating appropriate services. The staff will be available for consultations and will be willing to work with any outside evaluators.

**DIRECTRESS:** If you wish to speak with your child's directress, we suggest that you either send a note with your child requesting that the directress call you at her convenience, or call the office and leave a message for her to return your call.

**DISMISSAL:** MCS strives to offer quality programs for its students. In the event that your child's directress does not believe that the program meets your child's needs, your directress will confer with you regarding placement.

In the event that dismissal of a child is recommended by a directress, the parent is only responsible for tuition and fees used during the enrollment period.

**DRESS CODE:** Students should dress appropriately and comfortably to suit the weather. Washable clothes which are easily manipulated are strongly recommended. Students who are enrolled in the after school, kindergarten, and elementary programs should be prepared for outside activities.

All outer garments should be labeled with your child's first name and last initial. Since snow boots may not be worn during the school day, your child will need to bring a pair of school shoes to wear. Only shoes with backs may be worn at school. MCS does NOT recommend open-toe sandals, "cros", and footwear with heels over one inch as school shoes.

The staff and/or administration reserve the right to use its discretion in determining the type of clothing appropriate for the school setting.

**EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING:** In case of severe weather conditions, parents should rely on their own judgment as to whether to transport their child to school. Classes will be canceled as little as possible. We realize that an emergency school closing can be extremely inconvenient, especially if both parents work. We will make every attempt to give you as much advance notice as possible. Please remember that if school must be canceled, we do so only for the safety and well-being of the students. If it becomes necessary to close the school due to severe weather conditions, information regarding school closing will be broadcast on the local radio station (WJOB 1230AM), on Chicago radio and television stations via the Emergency Closing Center, and online at [www.emergencyclosings.com](http://www.emergencyclosings.com).

**EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS:** Various after school activities for students enrolled in the after school, kindergarten, and/or elementary programs may be offered during the school year. Information regarding these programs will be distributed to the students. The student's parents/guardians are responsible for any additional fees for these activities.

On the day of the extracurricular activity, a child who is absent from school or sent home from school due to illness or behavior may not participate in the after school program. Your consideration of the instructors and classmates is appreciated.

**FIELD TRIPS:** Each school year the directresses (either individually or in combination) may take the students on field trips. Special permission from the parents of each student is required (FIELD TRIP RELEASE FORM or special release form). School is not in session for students not attending field trips. There is usually a fee charged for admission and/or rental of buses. The activity fee covers transportation and/or admission costs for elementary students.

**FINANCIAL AID:** Minimal funds are available to assist families with economic hardships to enable their child to continue in our Montessori program. Please contact the school office for additional information and an application. All information is confidential.

**HEAD LICE:** Although not considered a health hazard, a child with lice and/or nits (unhatched egg casing) will be sent home to receive treatment. Before your child returns to school, carefully inspect your child's scalp to ensure that no evidence of living insects or nits are present.

**HEALTH AND ILLNESS:** When your child is ill, call the office and leave a message for your child's directress.

All skin infections, cuts, and/or scrapes should be covered by a clean, dry bandage until healed. Any child with uncovered open or draining wounds will be removed from the classroom and a parent/guardian will be called to care for the wound. This is a precaution for the safety of the child and the other children in the classroom.

Sometimes factors unrelated to a child's illness influence the decision on whether or not to send a child to school. The parent's work schedule, the car pool arrangements, the money spent, or the child's desire to attend sometimes incline us to allow a child to attend who really should not.

If the spread of colds, flu, and other illnesses can be decreased, the total days missed will also decrease, and we will all benefit. To help decrease the spread of illness, the following policy should be adhered to in deciding whether or not to send a child to school.

#### RELATIVE NO-SHOW

1. After initial 24 hours of uncomplicated common cold when secretion has become less runny.
2. Upper respiratory infection where the cough is not severe enough to be disruptive to the child or to others.
3. Injuries where ambulation can be maintained without help. Plaster casts and slings should not keep a child from attending school.

#### ABSOLUTE NO-SHOW

1. Childhood diseases --- mumps, chicken pox, strep throat, impetigo, conjunctivitis, pertussis, scarlet fever, etc. Communicable diseases should be reported to the school office immediately.
2. Any fever, vomiting or diarrhea: The child should not return to school for 24 hours after problem ceases without fever reducers and/or other medications that mask the symptoms.
3. Any skin rash which has not been diagnosed by a doctor. A parent/guardian will be notified when possible skin infections are detected.

**IF CHILDREN COME TO SCHOOL WITH ANY OF THE ABOVE CONDITIONS, THEY MAY BE SENT HOME.**

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school of any emotional, behavioral, allergies, and/or medical conditions/problems that may require the administration of medicine and/or management while the child is at school. The appropriate staff will meet with you to prepare a written Individual Care Plan (ICP).

**HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATION:** A Health and Immunization Form must be completed upon initial enrollment, when a toddler transfers to an early childhood program, and when a student enters the kindergarten program.

Those students who have not returned the completed Health and Immunization Form within 20 days of the first day of class will be suspended from class until the form is received. No reduction or credit in tuition is granted for suspensions.

Any parent/guardian that objects to their child being immunized, tested, examined and/or treated due to religious objections must submit a signed form, which can be picked up at the school office, stating that the objection is made on a religious basis. This form must be submitted annually for each child enrolled at MCS in accordance with I.C. 30-8.1-7-2. MCS may remove children without documentation of immunity from school as required by the local and/or state department of health and/or applicable statutes and/or regulations in the event of a communicable disease outbreak at MCS.

**INSERVICE/RELEASE DAYS:** During the school year, inservice/release days have been set aside for our staff to utilize for special visitations to other schools, workshops, or staff conferences. Parents will receive ample notification of the closing of the school for these days. (See the attached school calendar for specific dates.)

**LATE FEES:** A late fee is automatically charged to your account each month on any payment received more than five business days after the due date. (See Tuition Agreement and Tuition Agreement - Before and After School Program.)

A late fee is charged for any hour (or portion thereof) beyond closing of the extended hours program. (See Tuition Agreement - Before and After School Program.)

Students who are not picked up at their regular dismissal time will be considered late and charged according to the before and after school program rate schedule. After the third and each subsequent late pick up, there will be an additional late fee charged.

**MEDICATION:** When a student is in need of any medication at school, a written note (signed and dated) from the student's parent/guardian is required with the following information:

- student's name,
- name of medication,
- prescription number,
- dosage of medication, and
- time(s) to be taken.

The medication must be delivered to the school office by the parent/guardian in the original container with the student's name and dosage.

Medication may be administered by the principal, office secretary, student's directress, or any individual so designated.

**OBSERVATION:** Parents are welcome to observe the classrooms. Contact your child's directress to schedule your observation. Frequent visitors to the classrooms can hinder learner outcomes.

**OFFICE:** The school office will be staffed from 8:00 until 5:00 week days during the school year. The principal may be called at home in the evenings or on weekends.

**PARENT CONFERENCES:** Conferences are scheduled in the fall. Your child's directress will notify you as to the specific time.

Observation-conferences begin during the first week in January for students enrolled in the toddler, early childhood, kindergarten, and first level of elementary programs. Your child's directress will notify you as to the specific date. During this time, you will have an opportunity to work with your child, observe the classroom, and meet with the directress.

If you would like a conference with your child's directress at any other time, please contact the school office or your child's directress.

**PARENTS' RIGHTS:** Both parents of a student enrolled at Montessori Children's Schoolhouse have a right to participate in all school functions, confer with their child's directress, and receive school information. A student may be released to either parent. In cases of divorce or legal separation, these rights will be granted to both parents unless the school receives a copy of a court order which affects these rights.

**PAYMENTS:** The Board of Directors sets tuition, fees, and payment plan options each year. Any alternative payment schedule from parents must be presented, in writing, each year to the Board of Directors for approval.

If payments are not made pursuant to the agreed upon procedures, your child will be suspended from class until all due payments are received.

All charges incurred by the school for non-sufficient funds will be passed on to the payer.

Payments may be made at the school office or mailed to the school.

If payment on a student's account is not paid in full by the end of the school year, the Board of Directors will turn the account over for collection. No student will be enrolled for a new school year unless the student's account for the present school year is paid in full by the last business day in June.

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES:** All students who remain at school for lunch will have an outdoor recess unless it is rainy or severely cold. These students need to be dressed appropriately for the weather.

Elementary students have scheduled physical activity programs throughout the school year. Parents will be notified in advance as to the scheduled activity.

If any student is unable to participate in any physical activity/recess, a release from the child's physician must be sent to the school office.

**RELEASE AUTHORIZATION:** Prior to the start of each school year, parents will receive a release authorization. This authorization names the adults to whom the school may release your child. The school must be informed in writing if any changes occur in this authorization.

**SCHEDULE CHANGES:** Class assignments for a student will not be changed unless approved by the directress and the principal.

**SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:** Students are expected to participate in the various activities that occur during the school year. These activities are designed for numerous purposes. Some enable the students to broaden their knowledge, acceptance, and appreciation of others' culture, beliefs, and heritage. Some enable the students to become more aware of the world around them. Some encourage the development of life skills, sportsmanship, and cooperation. Some are scheduled for enjoyment in social situations.

All activities enable the classrooms to develop a community atmosphere and the students to foster respect for others. Every attempt is made to design these activities for the appropriate ages in the classroom.

**SECURITY:** Although the doors to the school are always "open" to you, the school does maintain a "locked door" policy. During the school day, all school doors are locked from the outside, a door bell has to be rung for entrance, and a code has to be entered for exiting. The school expects all staff members and parents to question any person that they do not recognize. Please do not be insulted if you are questioned by any staff member or parent.

**We are all responsible** for the security of our students and the school. It is your responsibility to notify all authorized persons of pertinent school policies and/or procedures. All parents/guardians will be required to return a signed MCS SECURITY POLICY form each school year. Please help us maintain security.

- **ONLY MCS STAFF MEMBERS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE EXIT CODE.**
- **TO EXIT THE SCHOOL THROUGH THE FRONT OR BACK DOOR, FIND A STAFF MEMBER TO ASSIST YOU.**
- **REINFORCE** with your child the school rule: **ONLY STAFF MEMBERS ARE ALLOWED TO OPEN THE DOORS.**
- **STOP AND NOTIFY** a staff member if the alarm is accidentally activated.

Only MCS security personnel, city, state, and federal law enforcement personnel are permitted to carry a weapon of any type within the school or at any school sponsored functions.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:** During the year, special events will be planned for the students and/or families. These events are planned by the committees of the Board. Parents will be made aware of all events well in advance through newsletters, bulletins, and/or special information releases. These events are great opportunities for the students and/or families to mix socially. Please try to participate.

**STUDENT RECORDS:** A student record file shall be maintained for each student for seven years after the student leaves the school. Information in a student file is confidential. Confidentiality of a student file shall not be viewed as being breached when the contents are viewed by staff personnel designated by the principal or in the event emergency or medical information is needed for the student.

Parents or legal guardians may examine information in a student's file upon written request. The principal and/or directress will be present when a student's file is reviewed. Parents or legal guardians may place signed and dated comments in the student's file.

A student's records, transcript, and/or enrollment status will be sent to another school only upon written release from the student's parent/guardian.

A student's records, progress reports/transcript, and test results will be released to student's parent/guardian only when the student's account is current.

**STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS:** Students are expected to respect each other within the school environment, which includes outside activities related to school functions. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to discuss with the student's directress any problems that the child can not resolve.

**SUSPENSION:** If your account is 30 days past due and alternative written arrangements for payment have not been made, your child/children will be suspended from class until all outstanding payments are received.

A student may be suspended from class if behavior is inappropriate (see DISCIPLINE).

If the Health and Immunization Form is not returned within 20 days of the first day of class, the student will be suspended from class until the form is received.

No reduction or credit in tuition is granted for suspensions.

If a suspended student is not re-instated to class within five school days after suspension, the Board of Directors shall withdraw the suspended student from school. Parents of said student will have thirty days after withdrawal to pay in full tuition used during the student's enrollment. If payment is not made within these thirty days, the Board of Directors shall turn the account over for collection.

**TOILET TRAINED:** Students entering an early childhood program are expected to be toilet trained by the start of the school year.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Provisions for transportation to and from school are left solely to the parents. You may contact the school office for names of parents in your area.

**TREASURES FROM HOME:** Students are encouraged to share some of their special belongings with the class. Items such as books, a CD, plants, and scientific treasures are welcomed. Clearly mark all items with your child's name. Cars, dolls, or toys are not usually allowed in the classrooms.

**TREASURES FROM SCHOOL:** Many materials in the classroom consist of small pieces that are attractive to the students. Sometimes these small pieces "find" their way into pockets. These pieces are very important!! If you discover any items, please place them in an envelope addressed to the classroom and return them to school. Please do not reprimand your child.

**VISITS FROM ALUMNI/ALUMNAE:** The school welcomes visits from former students. Be aware that these visits must accommodate the classroom and school schedules. Please contact the school office to arrange a brief visit.

**WITHDRAWAL:** Reduction or credit in tuition will not be granted if a student is withdrawn, unless said withdrawal is made at the specific request of the school. If withdrawal is necessitated by an economic hardship, tuition refunds, or a portion thereof, may be considered by the Board of Directors on a written request basis.

## MARIA MONTESSORI

Maria Montessori was born in Ancona, Italy in 1870. In 1896, she became the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School and joined the staff of the University's Psychiatric Clinic. As part of her duties, she visited children committed to the insane asylums. She became convinced these mentally deficient children could profit from special education and studied the work of pioneers Jean Itard and Eduoard Seguin.

Montessori was named director of the State Orthophrenic School in 1898 and worked with the children there for two years. All day she taught in the school and then worked preparing new materials, making notes and observations, and reflecting on her work. These two years she regarded as her "true degree" in education. To her amazement, she found these children could learn many things which had been thought impossible. This conviction led Montessori to devote her energies to the field of education for the remainder of her life.

In 1907, she was asked to direct a day-care center in a housing project in the slums of San Lorenzo, Italy. Montessori accepted, seeing this as her opportunity to begin her work with normal children. The sparse furniture was similar to that used in an office or home, and the only educational equipment were the pieces of sensorial apparatus Montessori had used with her mentally defective children.

Montessori says she had no special system of instruction she wished to test at this point. She wanted to compare the reactions of normal children to her special equipment with those of her mental defectives. She attempted to set up as natural an environment as possible for the children, and then she relied on her own observations of what occurred.

In observing the development in the children, Montessori felt she had identified significant and, at that time, unknown facts about children's behavior. She also knew that, in order to consider these developments as representing universal truths, she must study them under different conditions and be able to reproduce them. In this spirit, other schools were opened in Italy.

Word of Montessori's work spread rapidly. Visitors from all over the world arrived at the Montessori schools to verify for themselves the reports of these "remarkable children". The first comprehensive account of her work, The Montessori Method, was published in 1909. Montessori began a life of world travel -- establishing schools and teacher training centers, lecturing, and writing.

The Montessori Method was first introduced in the United States in 1912, when Montessori visited for a lecture tour. An American Montessori association was formed with Mrs. Alexander Bell as President and with Miss Margaret Wilson, President Woodrow Wilson's daughter, as secretary.

Montessori died in the Netherlands in 1952, receiving in her later years honorary degrees and tributes for her work throughout the world.

Excerpted from the IMS Newsletter, December, 1973.