



# The Innovative School

Authentic Private Montessori Education

## Authentic Montessori Education Overview and The Innovative School Information Packet for Prospective Families

*The Innovative School has been purposely designed to honor the century-old Montessori Method. Careful consideration of the needs of the children, the parents and the staff, together with the use of materials and practices which respect the environment, have all contributed to the design. This is much more than a building - it is a complete Montessori environment.*

*The Innovative School is an American Montessori Society (AMS) full member school, licensed for 91 children aged eighteen months to six years old. It has four designated fully-equipped Montessori classrooms each with a well trained, educated and credentialed MACTE accredited AMS teacher. Our environment is attached to a multi-purpose space and a library used for trainings, visitors and specialists by The Institute of Montessori Education. The outside playground and garden is fenced in and attached to the classrooms for easy access.*

*We look forward to sharing the journey of early childhood with your children and family. Please take the time to contact us with any questions big or small - we will do our best to help you.*

### Mission Statement

*The Innovative School is a passionate community of educators and families agreeing with Dr. Maria Montessori's methodology and philosophy. We strive to provide an authentic experience in a beautifully prepared environment for children to develop a love of learning and to achieve their fullest potential.*

**Adopted August 17, 2011**

*"The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six."*

- Dr. Maria Montessori

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## Characteristics of an Authentic Montessori School

### The Montessori Learning Environment

**A Child-Centered Environment:** The focus of activity in the Montessori setting is on children's learning, not on teachers' teaching. Generally student will work individually or in small, self-selected groups. There will be very few whole group lessons.

**A Responsive Prepared Environment:** The environment should be designed to meet the needs, interests, abilities, and development of the children in the class. The teachers should design and adapt the environment with this community of children in mind, rapidly modifying the selection of educational materials available, the physical layout, and the tone of the class to best fit the ever changing needs of the children.

**A Focus on Individual Progress and Development:** Within a Montessori program, children progress at the own pace, moving on to the next step in each area of learning as they are ready. While the child lives within a larger community of children, each student is viewed as a universe of one.

### Montessori Learning Activities

**Hands On Learning:** In Montessori, students rarely learn from texts or workbooks. In all cases, direct personal hands-on contact with either real things under study or with concrete models that bring abstract concepts to life allow children to learn with much deeper understanding.

**Spontaneous Activity:** It is natural for children to wiggle, touch things, and explore the world around them. Any true Montessori environment encourages children to move about freely, within reasonable limits of appropriate behavior. Much of the time they select work that captures their interest and attention, although teachers also strive to draw their attention and capture their interest in new challenges and areas of inquiry. And even within this atmosphere of spontaneous activity, students do eventually have to master the basic skills of their culture, even if they would prefer to avoid them.

**Active Learning:** In Montessori classrooms, children not only select their own work most of the time, but also continue to work with tasks, returning to continue their work over many weeks or months, until finally the work is "so easy for them" that they can teach it to younger children. This is one of many ways that Montessori educators use to confirm that students have reached mastery of each skill.

**Self-directed Activity:** One of Montessori's key concepts is the idea that children are driven by their desire to become independent and competent beings in the world to learn new things and master new skills. For this reason, outside rewards to create external motivation are both unnecessary and potentially can lead to passive adults who are dependent on others for everything from their self-image to permission to follow their dreams. In the process of making independent choices and exploring concepts largely on their own, Montessori children construct their own sense of individual identity and right and wrong.

**Freedom Within Limits:** Montessori children enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice, however their freedom always exists within carefully defined limits on the range of their behavior. They are free to do anything appropriate to the ground rules of the community, but redirected promptly and firmly if they cross over the line.

**Intrinsic motivation to learn:** In Montessori programs, children do not work for grades or external rewards, nor do they simply complete assignments given them by their teachers. Children learn because they are interested in things, and because all children share a desire to become competent and independent human beings.

### Montessori's Communities of Learners

**Mixed age groups:** Montessori classrooms gather together children of two, three, or more age levels into a family group. Children remain together for several years, with only the oldest students moving on to the next class at year's end.

**A Family Setting:** Montessori classrooms are communities of children and adults. As children grow older and more capable, they assume a great role in helping to care for the environment and meet the needs of younger children in the class. The focus is less on the teachers and more on the entire community of children and adults, much like one finds in a real family.

**Cooperation and Collaboration, Rather Than Competition:** Montessori children are encouraged to treat one another with kindness and respect. Insults and shunning behavior tends to be much more rare. Instead we normally find children who have a great fondness for one another, and who are free from the one-up-manship and needless interpersonal competition for attention and prestige. Because children learn at their own pace, and teachers refrain from comparing students against one another.

### To Awaken and Nurture the Human Spirit

**The Child As A Spiritual Being:** Montessori saw children as far more than simply scholars. In her view, each child is a full and complete human being, the mother or father of the adult man or woman she will become. Even when very young, the child shares with the rest of humanity hopes, dreams, and fears, emotions, and longing. From her perspective, this goes beyond mental health to the very core of one's inner spiritual life. Montessori consciously designs social communities and educational experiences that cultivate the child's sense of independence, self-respect, love of peace, passion for self-chosen work done well, and ability to respect and celebrate the individual spirit within people of all ages and the value of all life.

**Universal Values:** Montessori deliberately teaches children not only appropriate patterns of polite behavior, but seeks to instill basic universal values within the core of the child's personality. These values include self-respect, acceptance of the uniqueness and dignity of each person we meet, kindness, peacefulness, compassion, empathy, honor, individual responsibility, and courage to speak from our hearts.

**Global Understanding:** All Montessori schools are to a large degree international schools. They not only tend to attract a diverse student body representing many ethnic backgrounds, religions, and international backgrounds, but they actively celebrate their diversity. The curriculum is international in its heritage and focus, and consciously seeks to promote a global perspective.

**Service to Others:** Montessori's spiritual perspective leads Montessori schools to consciously organize programs of community service ranging from daily contributions to others within the class or school setting, to community outreach programs that allow children and adults to make a difference in the lives of others. The fundamental idea is one of stewardship.

### The Montessori Teacher

**Authoritative:** The teacher is firm at the edges and empathetic at the center, the kind of adult who responds empathetically to children's feelings, while setting clear and consistent limits.

**Observer:** The Montessori teacher is a trained observer of children's learning and behavior. These careful observations are recorded and used to infer where each student is in terms of his or her development, and leads the teacher to know when to intervene in the child's learning with a new lesson, a fresh challenge, or a reinforcement of basic ground rules.

**An Educational Resource:** Montessori teachers facilitate the learning process by serving as a resource to whom the children can turn as they pull together information, impressions, and experiences.

**Role Model:** Like all great teachers, the Montessori educator deliberately models the behaviors and attitudes that she is working to instill in her students. Because of Montessori's emphasis on character development, the Montessori teacher normally is exceptionally calm, kind, warm, and polite to each child.

### What Montessori Teachers Do

**Respectfully Engaged With The Learner:** The Montessori teacher recognizes that her role is not so much to teach as to inspire, mentor, and facilitate the learning process. The real work of learning belongs to the individual child. Because of this, the Montessori educator remains conscious of her role in helping each child to fulfill his potential as a human being and of creating an environment for learning within which children will feel safe, cherished, and empowered.

**Facilitates The "Match" Between The Learner And Knowledge:** Montessori teachers are trained to identify the best response to the changing interests and needs of each child as a unique individual. Because they truly accept that children learn in many different ways and at their own pace, Montessori educators understand that they must "follow the child," adjusting their strategies and timetable to fit the development of each of their pupils.

**Environmental Engineer:** Montessori teachers organize appropriate social settings and academic programs for children at their own level of development. They do this to a large degree through the design of the classroom, selection and organization of learning activities, and structure of the day. Often one sign of a school's commitment to professional excellence is its membership in one of the professional Montessori societies, such as the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) or the American Montessori Society (AMS).



## **The Role of the Parent and the School**

**Parent, teacher, child, and school relationships are very important in a student's life. An alliance based on mutual respect and support will enhance all individuals' understanding, knowledge, and insight and offer a cohesive, prepared learning environment.**

### **How to give support to The Innovative School:**

- Be involved, volunteer
- Be informed, attend all conferences & meetings
- Be knowledgeable, attend all parent education meetings and seminars
- Contribute your time and knowledge

Knowledgeable parents select a school by seeking an optimal match between their child's needs; their expectations; and the school's philosophy, program, and services. Parents support the school's policies and procedures and attend all school/parent programs, as well as read articles and books about Montessori education. Montessori is a philosophy of life not merely an academic educational methodology. Montessori schools not only enroll children they enroll families.

## **Parents and the American Montessori Society - Public Policy and Advocacy**

Dr. Maria Montessori viewed the child as a member of a family, not as an isolated individual, and one whose most formative life experiences take place within the family. She recognized parents as a child's first and most influential teachers.

### **As a parent you are a role model and teacher**

- Know your child well
- Be a patient observer and careful listener
- Place your confidence in your child
- Provide simple, safe and consistent rules encouraging your child to take responsibility and to contribute to his or her home and family.

### **As a parent you prepare your child's home**

- Provide safety (physical & emotional)
- Provide organization, consistency, a reliable routine
- Prepare areas that are child sized — a place of her/his own
- Provide your child age-appropriate responsibilities in you home
- Provide "real life" experiences
- Provide age-appropriate choices and opportunities to make positive decisions

### **As a parent you set the limits**

- Offer protection from objects and ideas that can hurt
- Always encourage your child to be capable and confident
- Limit toys and games to a workable number (rotate toys)
- Monitor television and other forms of media (inappropriate exposure can negatively affect social, emotional, intellectual, and physical growth)
- Develop consistent routines which encourage your child to develop self-control (self-control, responsible behavior and freedom are outcomes, not starting points)

### **As a parent you support and encourage your child**

- Offer great possibilities for exploration in the home environment
- Encourage children to do for themselves ("Let me do it myself!")
- Encourage your child to be an active agent of his/her own education

## Visitation and Observation

Please follow the listed guidelines below to observe our Montessori classrooms. Understanding how the Montessori classroom works will help you with your observation and assist your understanding of the goals we are pursuing. Our Montessori classroom is a "prepared" environment. Each piece of work has been placed on the shelf to help children independently develop a particular skill. Our environment operates on the principals of freedom within limits and based on the core Montessori beliefs, respect for each other and for the environment. Students are free to work at their own pace with materials they have chosen, either alone or with others. The teacher is a facilitator of the child's independent learning. The teacher relies on observation of the children as a continual assessment to determine which new activities, lessons or materials may be introduced to an individual child. The aim is to encourage active, self-directed learning and to strike a balance of individual mastery within the whole group community.

This is the student's classroom environment, so please be mindful to sit quietly as you observe. We ask that you stay seated and not engage the children in conversation as this will interrupt their concentration and focus.. A courteous "hello" and a direct response like "I am here to watch you work" would be appropriate. Please use these questions while observing our classroom. Enjoy your visit!

### **Please use these questions while visiting and observing the Montessori school:**

#### The Environment

1. Is the environment conducive to learning?
2. Are the children able to move about freely and choose work that interests them?
3. Are the materials easily accessible? Do the materials seem to be logically arranged?
4. Are the children kind to each other? How is the noise level?

#### The Children

1. Do the children learn from one another?
2. Are the children choosing work and staying with it? Are the children interested in their work?
3. What seems to be the length of time spent on an activity?
4. Do the children seem comfortable and relaxed in their environment?
5. Do they concentrate for extended periods of time?
6. Is their work orderly and are the materials returned to their original location?
7. Does the child seem positive and happy with what he or she is doing?

#### The Teacher

1. Do the teachers display patience and enthusiasm?
2. Does the teacher demonstrate materials clearly and seem aware of the child's response?
3. Are the teachers aware of the children's needs?
4. Does she speak softly and gently?
5. Do the children obey her cheerfully and readily?
6. Do the teachers reinforce appropriate behavior in the classroom?
7. Does the teacher have a MACTE accredited credential in the level they are teaching?

#### The School

1. Is the entrance clean and inviting? Is the school organized?
2. Are all the classrooms fully equipped with appropriate Montessori materials? Are multi-sensory "hands on" materials in regular use?
3. Is the management and staff credible? Does the faculty have the proper (MACTE accredited) teaching credentials?
4. Are the administrators friendly and knowledgeable?
5. Were you given appropriate information to make an informed decision regarding entry into the school?
6. Does the school seem happy? Does the school feel home-like or business-like?
7. Are the school administrators Montessori trained? Where did they obtain their Montessori credential?
8. Does the school offer parent support and education?
9. Does the school offer regular faculty and staff continuing education?
10. Would you as a parent want to attend school there?

## Innovative School Tuition and Policy

The Innovative School is dedicated to providing you the highest quality Montessori learning center for your family. Described below are the basic policies necessary for us to operate our school in which your child is enrolled. We are a school with a planned curriculum for the year, offer very low student/teacher ratios and employ degreed and certified professional teachers. For this reason, we cannot operate on a drop-in style monthly basis. Our program, staff and finances are arranged and set on a school year budget.

### Transition Community

<b>18 months - 3 years</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Annual (8/2014 - 5/2015)</b>	<b>Payment Plan (8/2014 - 5/2015)</b>
Half Day	9:00 am - 12:00 pm	\$6300.00 (8% Discount)	\$685.00
Full Day	9:00 am - 2:30 pm	\$6760.00 (8% Discount)	\$735.00
<b>Before &amp; After School</b>	<b>Hours</b>		<b>Monthly Fee</b>
Before and After Care	7:00 am - 9:00 am		\$55.00
After Care	2:30 pm - 6:00 pm		\$135.00

### Primary Community

<b>3 years - 6 years</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Annual (8/2014 - 5/2015)</b>	<b>Payment Plan (8/2014 - 5/2015)</b>
Half Day	8:30 am - 12:00 pm	\$5980.00 (8% Discount)	\$650.00
Full Day	8:30 am - 2:30 pm	\$6570.00 (8% Discount)	\$715.00
<b>Before &amp; After School</b>	<b>Hours</b>		<b>Monthly Fee</b>
Before and After Care	7:00 am - 8:30 am / 2:30 pm - 6:00 pm		\$165.00

**School tuition includes milk and organic snacks that include fresh fruits and vegetables.**

**Lunch is ordered directly through Georgia's Market at \$20.00 a week.**

**Admission and Additional Fees:** (non- refundable after payments have been received).

Application Fee \$20.00

Registration Fee \$75.00 (upon acceptance prior to orientation)

Annual Material and Program Fee: \$175.00 (upon acceptance prior to orientation)

Transition Monthly Ancillary Class Fee (weekly music and movement class) : \$10.00

Early Childhood Monthly Ancillary Class Fee (weekly music, movement, art and Spanish) :\$25.00

**Late Pick-Up Policy:** There will be a \$1.00 charge for every minute the child is at the school past closing.

**School tuition is an annual tuition based on a full ten month academic year**, which can be divided into payments due on the first of each month. Annual tuition covers the academic school year starting in mid-August ending in May. There is no reduction of tuition for absences due to illness, vacations or any other extended absence from the school. Summer camp (June through mid-August) is optional and not included in the academic school year tuition schedule. Families on a payment plan schedule, require a convenience fee of \$200. The completed registration form must be accompanied by a non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00 and material fee of \$175.00. There are no deductions or refunds for withdrawal during the academic school year. All fees paid to the school are non-refundable.

Families accepted to enroll (depending on availability) after the first day of school will be provided with a prorated tuition for the remainder of the school year.

**Please Note:** Holidays are not calculated into your monthly school tuition plan. Care is available on designated days during Spring and Summer Break for students enrolled in Before and After School Care only at a daily rate of \$20.00. All reservations will be on a prepaid basis.

**Summer Program:** Innovative's 10-week summer program (June to mid-August) is optional and not included in the annual school year tuition. This service is provided for our currently enrolled families and filled on a first come first serve basis. Summer program registration is due in March with a camp registration fee which is non-refundable. Once a commitment has been made to attend summer camp, families are responsible for the registered summer program calculated tuition. Please note, August payment will contain a separate summer camp tuition plus your first monthly annual payment for the academic school year.

**\* Withdrawal:** Families may request an exception to the annual tuition policy; which will be considered on an individual case by case basis. All requests must be submitted in writing 30-days in advance notice by the first of the month.



## 2014-2015 Academic School Year Calendar

August 11 -12	Individual Parent Orientations (new families)
August 14	Back to School Night at 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
<b>August 18</b>	<b>First Day of School</b>
August 29	Welcome Home - Family Pizza Night 6:00 PM
<b>September 1</b>	<b>Labor Day - School Closed</b>
September 5	Grandparent's and Parent's Coffee (8:30 AM/ EC & 9:00 AM/ T)
September 6	Positive Discipline Parent Workshop at 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
September 18	Montessori at Home Workshop 6:00 PM
<b>October 17</b>	<b>Staff Development Day - School Closed</b>
October 18	TIME Conference
October 24	EC Class Field Trip - Ranch
October 31	Fall Festival
November 6	Parent Workshop (Language Development) - 6:00 PM
Nov. 10 - 20	Early Childhood Parent Classroom Observations
<b>Nov. 26-28</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday - School Closed</b>
Dec. 1 - 5	Parent and Teacher Conferences
Dec. 15 -18	Individual Classroom Holiday Concerts 6:00 PM
Dec. 19	Early Dismissal at 12:00 PM
<b>Dec. 22-Jan. 2</b>	<b>Winter Holidays - School Closed</b>
<b>January 1 -2</b>	<b>New Year 2013 /Winter Holiday - School Closed</b>
January 5	Back to School - Second Semester
<b>January 19</b>	<b>MLK - School Closed Teacher In-Service Day</b>
January 22	Parent Workshop (Brain Development and Montessori) - 6:00 PM
January 30	Father's Breakfast (8:30 AM/ EC & 9:00 AM/ T)
February 5	Me and My Parent Night - 6:00 PM
Feb. 9 - 13	Parent and Teacher Conferences
Feb. 16	Re-enrollment for 2015-2016
February 27	Go Texan Day - Parent's Luncheon at 11:30 AM
March 6	Re-enrollment deadline
<b>March 16- 20</b>	<b>Spring Break - School Closed (B/A Care Students Only)*</b>
<b>April 3</b>	<b>Good Friday - School Closed</b>
April 18	Family Picnic 10:00 AM
April 23	Art Exhibit and Silent Auction 6:00 PM
April 27 - 30	Parent and Teacher Conferences
May 4 - 7	Teacher Appreciation Week
May 8	Mother's Day Tea 9:00 AM
<b>May 25</b>	<b>Memorial Day - School Closed</b>
May 28	Early Dismissal 12:00 PM - Last Day of School
June 1	First Day of Summer Camp