

# Maria Montessori Academy



## Parent Handbook 2019-2020

“It is true, we cannot make a genius; we can only give each individual the chance to fulfill his potential possibilities to become an independent, secure and balanced human being.”

~ Dr. Maria Montessori

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## **MISSION**

The mission of Maria Montessori Academy is to provide an individualized Pre K-9 education that promotes academic excellence founded on the authentic philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. MMA will craft each child's education in partnership with educators and parents to achieve higher levels of academic, personal, and social achievement, thereby preparing students to become constructive contributors to their community.

## **VISION & EMPHASIS**

We are a community of families, educators, and community leaders dedicated to making a positive and lasting impact on our environment, our state, and our nation. Our vision is to educate students that will become citizens whose actions reflect strong character, ethical values, an awareness of their role as stewards of this earth, and a clear understanding of their own and others self-worth and dignity. Maria Montessori Academy's academic program offers a uniquely prepared environment emphasizing the intellectual and humanitarian development of students. Individual attention to educating the whole child will produce self-disciplined, cooperative, responsible, and creative thinkers who positively affect their school, neighborhood, and the world at large.

## **GOALS**

We strive to provide a learning environment tailored to enhance your child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. We are concerned with your child's individual growth and potential. It is our goal to give our children a basis for strong character and moral development, happiness and fulfillment, thus encouraging harmony and courage.

## **CHARTER SCHOOLS (What are they?)**

Charter schools are publicly funded and are not private schools. They are open to all students, are committed to improving public education, demonstrate a record of student achievement, and have specific educational missions and focuses. Charter schools are public schools created by a group of parents, teachers, or community leaders who see an educational need in their community and want to meet that need. To operate, charter founders must submit an application for approval by the State Charter School Board or the board of a school district. The [MMA Charter Application](#) can be viewed on the MMA website.

## **KEY POINTS OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD OF EDUCATION**

- Montessori schools promote respect for children as unique individuals.
- The child's social and emotional development along with academic development is of great concern.
- Montessori schools are supportive schools where children do not get lost in the crowd.
- Peace education is paramount to the Montessori philosophy. Dr. Maria Montessori was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times in her lifetime.
- Classrooms are bright and exciting environments for learning.
- The classrooms are multi-age classes which span three grade levels so children develop close and long-term relationships with teachers and classmates.

- The multi-grade classroom encourages a strong sense of community and teachers come to know each child's learning style.
- Classrooms are not teacher centered, but child centered. This allows students to develop their leadership skills and independence.
- The Montessori method assumes that children are born intelligent, they simply learn in different ways and progress at their own pace. Multiple intelligences are recognized and encouraged. Students move ahead as quickly as they are ready.
- Texts and workbooks are rarely used because many of the skills and concepts are abstract and a text simply does not bring them to life.
- Montessori relies on hands-on, concrete materials to introduce new concepts. Investigation and research are experiences that actively engage the student.
- Learning is not based on rote drill and memorization.
- Montessori schools set high expectations and challenges all students, not just those considered "gifted."
- Students develop self-discipline and an integral sense of purpose and motivation.
- Montessori schools normally promote diversity in their student body, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and global perspective.
- Students develop a love of the natural world; outdoor education is a very important part of the Montessori curriculum.
- Students learn to care and contribute to others through their community service.
- Montessori teachers facilitate learning and coach students who come to know them as mentors.
- Students learn that mistakes are natural steps in the learning process.
- Montessori students learn to collaborate and work together on major projects. They strive for their personal best in this non-graded environment, rather than competing for the highest grade in the class.
- Families are important in these caring environments.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Working in partnership with parents/guardians to provide an education that meets the needs of the whole child is a central component of MMA's approach. Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to actively participate in their children's academic life by attending parent-teacher conferences, participating in the establishment of annual goals, and attending program meetings and open houses. Classroom observations and discussions with teachers will further involve parents/guardians in their child's experience at school.

### **MAPA**

MAPA is the Montessori Academy Parent Association and the success of the Montessori program depends upon the dedication and cooperation of the teachers and parents. MAPA's concern and efforts have the same objective at MMA – to promote the fullest development of the child. Besides supporting the school and the staff, parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's Montessori experience through volunteering in various ways, by serving on committees, helping with maintenance, preparing materials, and participating in fundraising

events. This assistance needs not be limited to only a few families. We need total support from our families. "If we all do a little, we can accomplish a lot!" To get involved in one of these many opportunities please contact the school office or email them at [MAPA@mariamontessoriacademy.org](mailto:MAPA@mariamontessoriacademy.org).

### **OBSERVING THE CLASSROOM/VISITING THE SCHOOL**

Parents are welcome and encouraged to observe their child's class. Arrangements should be made in advance with the child's teacher. Observations should be kept to 45 minutes or less to minimize distractions for the students. **We will schedule observations after the first eight weeks of the school year, when the children have settled into a harmonious and familiar routine.**

The parent's role while in the classroom should be that of an observer of the children and their activities. We ask that the observer not become involved in what the children are doing, but to remain in the background and enjoy watching the children at work. If you have questions about what you have observed or need to talk with your child's teacher for any reason, please check with the office for the best time to call them or make an appointment. We ask that the following guidelines be observed while observing in the classroom:

- Childcare arrangements for other children need to be made ahead of time.
- A classroom observation form will be required for each observation. This form will be given to the Director for appropriate follow-up with the teacher.
- Sit quietly in an observation chair. You may move to a different chair to observe another area of the room. Try not to make your presence felt.
- Do not ask the children questions or engage in conversation. If a child asks you a question, answer briefly then state that you are there to watch the class work.
- Do not walk around the room or handle the materials.
- Please schedule conferences with the teachers at another time when their attention can be focused on you.

### **Volunteers**

All families are encouraged to volunteer forty hours of service each school year. In accordance with State Law, volunteers who work with minors may be subject to background checks. Volunteers who require a background check must sign a waiver. Periodic scans will be scheduled at the school for your convenience. All background checks are kept confidential. If you have questions regarding background checks please contact the school office.

### **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

A complete list of policies and procedures can be accessed on [MMA's website](#).

### **CALENDAR and DAILY SCHEDULE**

The school calendar is available on [MMA's calendar website page](#). A calendar will also be made available in hard copy upon request at the front office. The daily bell schedule, half-day kindergarten schedule, and early dismissal schedules are also found on [MMA's schedule](#)

[website page](#).

### **CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE**

Birthdays are important to children. The Montessori class has a ceremony used to observe these special occasions called the “Celebration of Life.” Please understand that this not a birthday party, but rather a celebration of the child’s life thus far. Parents are asked to provide a brief biography with a few photos of the child. We encourage the parents to attend and to comment about the child’s growth and important events in the child’s life. **No food or party like favors (such as balloons, pencils, or stuffed animals) will be permitted during your child’s Celebration of Life.** Children with summer birthdays will have an opportunity to celebrate their birthday. Families may arrange a Celebration of Life by contacting their teacher to arrange a time convenient for families and that fits the class schedule. Please note that this is a special ceremony for each child. Children from other classes will not attend their sibling’s Celebration of Life as this is disruptive to other classes and lessons. **If your child is inviting classmates to any kind of party or event outside of school, please mail these invitations from home. DO NOT distribute invitations at school.** If the whole class is not invited, please talk with your child about not discussing the party or who is invited at the school, as it can hurt others’ feelings.

### **COMMUNICATION**

To help parents be aware of special events and activities, the school publishes an online newsletter. The newsletter is emailed to all families that have provided an email address. Please contact the office to request a hard copy of the newsletter if you are not able to access it online.

In addition to the newsletter, the school or individual classes often send home flyers with important information about upcoming events or activities. We strive to give families the information they need to help their children be prepared for class each day. It is important that parents/guardians be responsible for and aware of all information published in this handbook, monthly calendars, newsletters, and other written communication that is emailed or sent home with your children. Please help us ensure you receive communication in a timely manner by updating your email address with the MMA office.

### **Change of Address or Telephone Number**

Keep the school informed of any change of address or telephone number during the school year. This will help keep our records current and make it much easier to reach you should an emergency occur.

### **Messages for Students**

In the event you have an **emergency** for your child, feel free to call the school office, and we will get the message to your child. Students will not be removed from class to take phone calls.

### **Telephone Use by Students**

While there are telephones located in each classroom, students may use the telephone *only* at the direction of the teacher. If the phone call is one that needs to be made from the office, the

student is expected to have his/her teacher's permission before coming to the office. Once in the office, the student is expected to ask the staff before attempting to place a phone call. Students will not use the phone for personal calls or to make after school plans. This is to insure that the phone line remains open for school business as much as possible. If your student is carrying a cell phone, please be aware of the [Electronic Resources Policy](#).

## **CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**

Maria Montessori Academy is committed to preparing students to be constructive contributors in their community by focusing on academic, personal, and social development. The learning environment of MMA is based on the Montessori philosophy because of its emphasis on the development of the whole child. Maria Montessori recognized that children have an innate desire to learn and, given the proper environment, they will thrive intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. This “prepared environment,” as Dr. Montessori termed it, includes not only the classroom with its materials and authentically trained teachers, but also the social setting and atmosphere. Under this philosophy, it is imperative that the learning environment supports the whole child.

The Montessori philosophy specifically addresses diversity in communities by providing a child-centered, individualized approach to teaching and learning. MMA’s educational approach addresses the community’s diversity to ensure that no child is left behind. The educational tenets of our philosophy and methods of instruction supporting our mission and distinguishing our program are:

***Individualized & Differentiated Learning:*** Montessori education is built upon the tenet that all learners are individuals in style, pace, and interests. MMA’s individualized curriculum allows children to strive for their own personal best. The child’s academic, social, and emotional progress will be reviewed at parent-teacher-student conferences. Teachers will work with students to generate weekly work plans to support academic growth and achievement by listing the specific actions and work to be completed each week. These work plans also support the student’s personal development as the plans allow students to make choices, develop time management, and self-assess. Providing students with differentiated instruction, integral to individualized learning and the Montessori philosophy, has been demonstrated to increase success and satisfaction in school.

***Mixed-age Groupings:*** Montessori classrooms span three years at the elementary level. These mixed-age settings provide several benefits to the student. They more closely model real-life situations where people of varying ages and experience work and live together. Children in this setting also benefit from peer tutoring opportunities that naturally occur. Older students model and motivate the younger students. The younger students aspire to do what the older students can do. Skills are thus reinforced, for not only the younger students, but also the older students. The benefits of collaborative learning arrangements extend beyond academic achievement. The social climate of these classrooms enhances social relations, discipline and individual well-being.

***Integrated Teaching & Learning:*** Montessori education emphasizes interdisciplinary teaching to encourage students to make connections across the curriculum and to their own personal lives. Emphasis will be placed on projects that require open-ended research and in-depth study using primary and secondary sources, as well as other materials. The Montessori didactic materials were specifically designed to enable students to understand the connections in their learning. When students understand these connections in their learning activities, they become more motivated learners.

***Prepared Environment:*** Montessori environments are designed to enable instruction to progress from the concrete, hands-on exploration to concept development, to abstract understanding. Elementary classrooms at MMA will have an abundance of carefully sequenced Montessori materials to support this learning progression.

***Teacher's Role:*** Montessori teachers are trained to be scientific observers of their students and the learning environment. These observations will guide teachers in their lesson presentations and in their evaluation of each student's progress. Teachers guide students by making changes in the environment, offering invitations for inquiry, and direct instruction. Teachers will work to create and sustain a classroom and school culture where demonstrations of respect, initiative, risk-taking, and persistence in learning are the norm. In the younger grades, teachers will work frequently with individuals or small groups.

***Parent Involvement:*** MMA considers all caregivers to be vital partners in the education of their children. Therefore, parents are welcome at MMA and encouraged to participate in and help set school goals. In conjunction with teachers and students, parents will be encouraged to provide input and feedback on the educational goals and weekly work plans. MMA is committed to providing frequent parent education opportunities so the Montessori philosophy is well understood and embraced.

***Character Education:*** Personal and social education will be integrated into MMA's learning program. Classroom life will emphasize the Montessori values of grace, courtesy, respect and, responsibility. Dr. Montessori's Peace Education efforts, which were acknowledged by her being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, will be a cornerstone of the Character Education program. Teachers will model these values and expect them from students throughout the school.

***Community Connection:*** Children grow and learn in an increasingly expansive and diverse community. Students at MMA will first come to understand the world and their part in it by discovering the community within the classroom, then by contributing to the life of the school and caring for the surrounding plant and animal habitats, and finally by supporting the larger community beyond the school.

## **Methods of Instruction**

Maria Montessori Academy's curriculum and classes are divided into four levels:  
Pre-K/K - Early Childhood

Grades 1-3 - Lower Elementary  
Grades 4-6 - Upper Elementary  
Grades 7-9 - Adolescent

A lead teacher and an assistant will be assigned to each elementary class that consists of approximately 30 students. Each student will stay with the same teacher for each level. This continuity maximizes teaching and learning because students do not spend time every year getting to know new teachers, classrooms, and entirely new peer groups. Research on this approach demonstrates increased student achievement and greater parental involvement, both of which are central to MMA's mission.

A foundational Montessori tenet is that students must have long, uninterrupted daily work periods each day.

In the Kindergarten and Lower Elementary, MMA's program will provide an array of specially developed materials and methods. These allow young children to build concepts from concrete models and experiences through self-directed activity and peer and teacher interaction. These core materials become less evident in the Upper Elementary as students begin to transition from concrete to symbolic and abstract conceptual understandings.

### **DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP**

The carpool plan and map will be shared with all families through the newsletter email as well as posted on [MMA's Policies and Procedures website](#).

To ensure the safety of your children and yourself, and to facilitate an efficient process, please keep the following in mind:

- Please be patient and courteous toward MMA staff, students, and other drivers.
- Follow the directions of crossing guards and all staff.
- Stay in your vehicle at all times.
- Refrain from mobile phone usage while driving on school grounds.
- Students will exit and enter from the RIGHT SIDE of the vehicle ONLY and at the CURB ONLY.
- Always pull forward when moving in line spaces opens in front of you.
- BE AWARE: By law, all vehicle occupants must be secured in a seat belt and children UNDER 8 must be secured into a car seat or booster seat BEFORE VEHICLE IS IN MOTION.

Students must be picked up at dismissal or immediately following an after school program. If a student is left at school for more than 20 minutes after their dismissal time, we will start a late list and parents will be asked to conference with the Director.

### **DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS**

Students, staff, parents, and visitors are prohibited from use of tobacco products and other illegal and harmful substances on school grounds, in school buildings, and in school vehicles at all times. Tobacco products refer to all uses of tobacco for smoking or chewing and includes

cigars, cigarettes, pipes, shredded tobacco, smokeless tobacco, snuff, e-cigarettes, and vaping.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Teachers are encouraged to take their classes on educationally oriented or service learning field trips. Permission slips will be sent home whenever your child's teacher organizes such a trip. Permission from parents/guardians is needed for participation in field trips. These slips must be signed by the parent/guardian and turned in to the school. If the slip is not signed and returned, your child will not go on the field trip. There may be additional forms required for field trips; these will be made available prior to the field trip. For most trips, parents/guardians will need to transport their child to and from field trips.

### **FIRE, LOCK-DOWN, AND DISASTER DRILLS**

Fire and disaster drills are conducted regularly in an effort to acquaint teachers and students with the necessary actions required to guarantee maximum safety for all students. Students are guided through drills and assigned specific areas of safety where they are to go when a fire/disaster signal is given.

### **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

- **School will Follow Police Instructions -**  
North Ogden Police/Fire Department - 505 E. 2600 N., North Ogden. – (801) 782-7219  
Ogden City Police - 2186 Lincoln Ave. – (801) 629-8221
- **Evacuation Site**  
North Shore Aquatic Center  
801-737-0587  
245 E 2550 N, North Ogden
  - **School will be open** until 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday.
  - **Telephone contact, if phone land lines working**, will be available
  - **Telephone contact, if phone land lines are not operational**, school personnel have cell phones

### **ITEMS FROM HOME**

The classrooms more than adequately provide for the children's needs at school. However, children often want to bring things from home. With teacher permission, children may share personal items things for "show and teach" or special classroom displays or events. These items should be labeled with the child's name. Toys should be left at home. Please discuss this with your child.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

All "lost and found" articles such as clothing, lunch boxes, backpacks, and glasses, are to be brought to the office. Every effort is made to get students to check the "lost and found" area and claim their belongings. All major items of clothing, lunch boxes, and backpacks should be marked with your child's name. If your child is missing something you sent to school with them, please feel free to come and look through the "lost and found" area. All articles not claimed by the end of each month, will be donated to a local charity

## **LUNCH PROGRAM**

Students will need to bring a lunch every day. Please make sure the lunch box is cleaned daily. Lunch boxes should be labeled clearly with the child's name. Please provide a nutritional lunch including juice or milk. **Soda, caffeinated beverages, and candy are not permitted. Fast food is not to be brought to the school as a lunch substitute.** We encourage all students to help reduce waste by bringing lunch in reusable containers. Lunches cannot be refrigerated at school, so include an ice pack if the lunch is perishable. There are limited microwave ovens available for food warm-ups; however, food should be already cooked and require less than two minutes heat time. Please send foods that the child can prepare and navigate independently.

In the case of a forgotten lunch, students will be allowed to call parents.

## **Individualized Health Plans**

If your child's health condition requires an Individualized Health Plan, please contact the office and a plan will be written. It is vital that we be informed of health issues that affect your student's well being while attending MMA.

## **Illness**

We are concerned about the health of all of our students. If your child is sick, keep them home; otherwise, your child will be expected to participate in all activities unless a physician's note has been provided. In accordance with CDC guidelines, families are encouraged to keep your child home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

If a situation arises during the school day when a child feels ill, the child will be sent to the office. Office staff will take the child's temporal temperature and call the parents/guardians if the temperature is 100°F or higher.

## **Head Lice**

MMA follows CDC guidelines when head lice are encountered at school. When a case of head lice is identified, MMA will call parents/guardians of the affected child. Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice.

Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Isolated cases of head lice are treated as such; only the affected children's parents/guardians are notified. If there are several children in a classroom affected, the teacher will send a notice to the parents/guardians of all children in that classroom. If several classrooms are affected, we will send a general notice to all Maria Montessori Academy parents.

## **Injuries**

Students are instructed to report all injuries to their classroom teacher or assistant. Staff members are to report all accidents or injuries to the office. If the injury is an emergency, 911 will be called. Parents will be notified immediately, and an ambulance summoned, if needed. It is important that parents/guardians keep contact information current with the office. In case of an emergency, the school will release the student's medical information to emergency personnel. On occasion, students do not tell the teacher or office that they have sustained an injury. Parents/Guardians who find out their child had an injury at school and know the student did not report should inform the office as soon as possible.

## **MONEY AND OTHER VALUABLES**

Excessive amounts of money or other valuable items, such as handheld electronic games and jewelry, should not be brought to school as there is no place in the classroom to safeguard items of value. **The school will not be responsible for items brought by your child to school that become lost, stolen, or damaged.**

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Students are provided physical education instruction each week and they are expected to participate unless they have an injury. An injury or illness requiring loss of more than three days of physical education class requires a doctor's written permit. Physical conditioning is stressed in physical education along with cleanliness, safety, and having an enjoyable time. Incorporation of a wide range of interests along with activities that will carry over in future years is the basis of the physical education program.

## **PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION**

School staff and volunteers provide supervision on the playground at recess. Maria Montessori Academy does not provide student supervision on the playground before or after school. All students are expected to leave school or be picked up by a parent/guardian immediately following dismissal.

## **SCHOOL CLOSING/INCLEMENT WEATHER OR EMERGENCY DISMISSAL**

Occasionally there are days when weather or other conditions necessitate the closing of school. Maria Montessori Academy will close according to Weber School closure announcements. Please listen to the radio or morning news for school closure announcements. **PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CALL MARIA MONTESSORI ACADEMY.** If the weather is bad, there will be no one here to answer the phone. Should the occasion arise when weather or other conditions necessitate sending children home earlier than the scheduled dismissal time, announcements will be made via email, and/or via our phone notification system. Make emergency arrangements for your children if case this should occur and make sure your children know what these arrangements are. The school office will remain open for parent/guardian contact and students will be permitted to use the phone during these emergencies.

## **SCHOOL PRIDE AND SERVICE**

It is the philosophy of Maria Montessori Academy to provide all students opportunities to learn benefits of service. As part of the school curriculum, students will have opportunity to participate in school-sponsored projects such as school grounds beautification, tutoring, community service learning experiences.

### **SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

Utah law requires that schools furnish students with necessary daily school supplies, such as pencils, crayons, paper, and rulers. However, you may desire providing your child(ren) with a pencil box and other kinds of supplies. In addition, periodically there may be specific supplies needed from home for special projects. Classroom teachers will notify parents when this occurs. Check the website for teacher requested donations.

### **STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Maria Montessori Academy admits students of any race, color, national, ethnic or religious origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission or other school-administered programs.

### **STUDENT RECORDS**

All student records are and information contained in them is privileged and strictly confidential. MMA will not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without the written consent of the child's parents/guardians. The school will notify the parents/guardian if a record is subpoenaed. All student records are open to parental inspection. Parents/Guardians wishing to review their child's records will contact the school to arrange completion of the necessary form. The Director, after reviewing the completed form, will schedule an opportune time for review. The Director or other designated school personnel will then explain and interpret the student's records to parents. In some instances when requesting school records, completion of a GRAMA Form may be required. The school will follow the Utah Government Records Access Management Act passed in 1991.