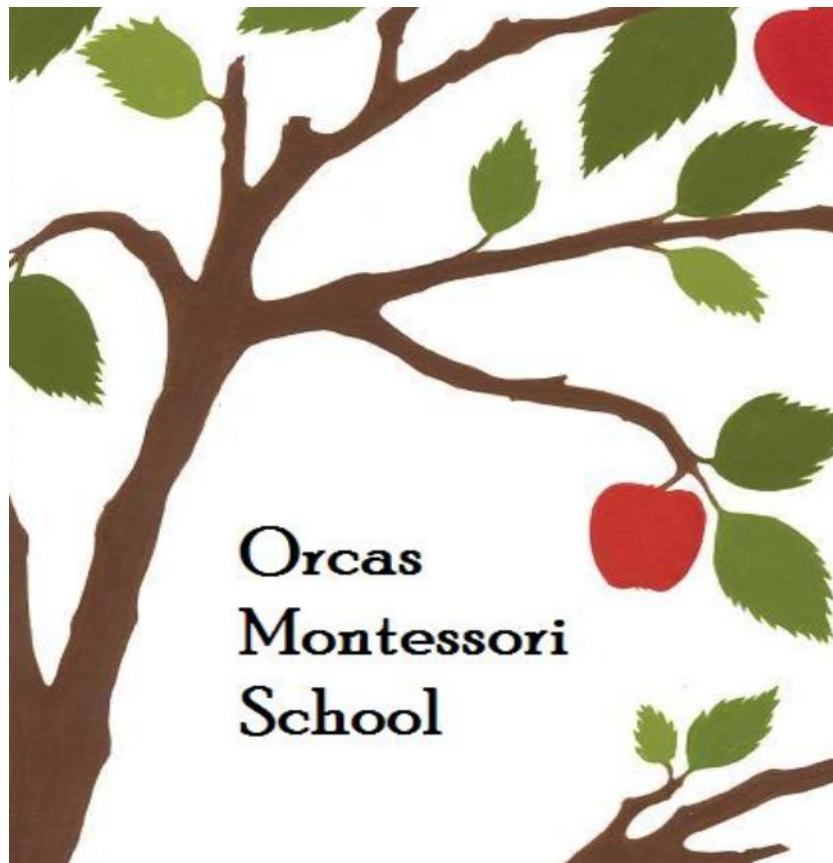


# Orcas Montessori School Parent Handbook



2009-10

*“And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher’s task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child.” (Dr. Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind* p. 6)*

## Welcome and thank you!

We thank you so much for joining our school, and hope that you will take a few minutes to read this handbook. It contains a lot of information about our general procedures and the opportunities we offer to help you remain strongly involved with your child's experience in our classroom.

### **A Brief Overview**

Building on over 100 years of tradition and experience, today's Montessori classroom seeks to recognize and respect the unique journey all children must take in discovering their own independence and their own sense of place within the greater community of the world that we all share.

Under the careful observation and direction of a trained guide, the children are given the freedom and time to explore a full curriculum of tools that have been specifically designed to assist their natural and spontaneous interactions with the world around them. Our aim is to help each child to discover and refine the skills they need to attain a successful development of their body, intellect and psyche. By following the children's lead, we are able to guide them towards work which satisfies their own innate tendencies. By offering the children time to fully master the skills they seek, we hope to instill a love of work and a self confidence that will carry far beyond the three years they spend in our classroom.

As the children follow their path through the classroom, we invite and encourage you, the parents, to learn more of the Montessori Method by borrowing books from our library, attending our Parent Education Nights, and, most importantly, feeling free to bring us any questions you may have. In this way we can work together to more fully support your child's time within our program.

## **Getting Acquainted**

### **❖ Enrollment Procedure**

Pre-registration forms are available to returning students in the spring. Parents are encouraged to pre-register their returning students and younger siblings interested in attending the following school year by March 13. Their scheduling choices will be discussed at the spring parent teacher conference. Child readiness for full day will be determined at this time.

Parents of new students interested in enrolling may fill out a pre-registration form at any time and put their child on the waiting list. The date this form is turned in will be recorded on the form. After returning students are enrolled, the remaining spaces will be filled from the dated order in which the pre-registration forms were received.

In order to insure enough available morning spaces for incoming three year olds, we will limit the number of morning spaces available to returning four year olds registered for half day. After enrolling the three year olds, any available morning spaces will be filled by half day four year olds in the order requests are received. The remaining four year olds will be registered in the afternoon session.

Students will begin in September, but new admissions may begin throughout the year if there is space available.

### ❖ **Your Child's School Needs**

1. For your child's comfort and independence, please provide simple sturdy clothing free of complicated fastenings. This will enable your child's independence when changing his clothes or using the bathroom. A good pair of rubber boots a hat and appropriate outer gear are needed when the weather is wet or cold. Outside work and play is so important and good for your child that we will go out daily unless the weather is too severe.
2. Please bring a warm pair of rubber soled slippers or clean indoor slip-on shoes to ensure warm, dry feet and clean floors. Please avoid large character slippers and make sure they fit comfortably.
3. Bring a change of clothing (including warm sweatshirt, pants, shirt, socks, and underwear) to be stored in your child's cubby. Please check the cubby daily for a bag of wet clothes that will need to be taken home and replaced the next day with dry ones.
4. Bring a small, hardy indoor plant to school for the children to water and care for.
5. Please bring a small ceramic cup or glass with your child that can be kept at school for use when he/she is thirsty.

### ❖ **Conferences and Visits**

We request that each family join us in an initial intake interview to help us insure that your child's own particular needs are best met by our classroom and staff.

Once enrolled, conferences will be scheduled twice a year to keep you fully informed about your child's time in the room.

Two classroom visits are arranged during the year (generally in mid October and early Spring) to give all parents a chance to see first hand the amazing work that your children are engaged with. Of course you are welcome to visit at any time, though to protect the children's focused work environment and to avoid too many visitors at a time, we do ask that you contact us prior to this visit so we can avoid "double-bookings."

As our program relies on comfortable and open communication between our staff and our families, you will find our doors always open and our staff always ready to respond to any questions that may arise over the course of the year. Please tell us of any events in your family that may be affecting your child positively or adversely (i.e. illness or death, separation, difficult traveling, a new baby, etc.). If you have any concerns about how your child is doing, especially if your child experiences a difficult transition, please don't hesitate to call and check in. *We do request that matters involving a discussion of the children themselves be scheduled in advance so that we can talk without the children's presence.* This can be done in person, on the phone or via e-mail.

We also welcome you to come and share your talents and interests in the school. Let us know if you are interested, and we will plan a special group time activity with the children.

## Things You Should Know!

### ❖ School Rhythms

- 8:15 - 11:15 Group time, work cycle within the indoor Montessori environment, outdoor environment and snack
- 11:15 - 11:30 Outdoor playtime
- 11:25 Departure for morning students
- 11:25- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:00-12:30 Outdoor playtime
- 12:30 Departure for morning students leaving after lunch
- 12:35-3:10 Extended day work cycle within the indoor Montessori environment, outdoor environment and snack, group time
- 3:10-3:30 Outside playtime
- 3:30 Afternoon dismissal

### ❖ Arrival and Departure

**You must sign your child in and out daily with your full name and the time.**

School runs from Monday - Thursday. Morning session hours are from 8:15 to 11:25 with lunch served at 11:30. Children staying for lunch must be picked up by 12:25. Afternoon session hours are 12:30-3:30. We have a fifth day option of our Friday morning session from 8:30-11:30 which can be added to the four day program.

We ask that all families be respectful of our drop off and pick up times. Late arrivals are disruptive for your child as well as the rest of the class. We will not accept children into the room prior to 8:15, as we are generally preparing the environment.

Please inform a staff member in advance if you have made arrangements for another adult to pick up your child and note it on the sign in sheet. Make sure to list that individual on your release form on file. We will need a written permission slip for any adult who is not on your release form for pick up.

If there is some mishap with your pickup arrangements, please call us promptly and we will help if we can. We are on a tight schedule and it is important that you pick up your child on time. Unless you call and tell us that you're unavoidably delayed and will be late, a late fee of \$ 5 every 15 minutes after pickup time will be charged to your next month's payment.

### ❖ Bringing Items From Home

If your child has something beautiful or interesting from the natural world or something of historical or scientific interest, please encourage her to bring and share it with her classmates. Please limit such shared items to one per week. **Please help your child leave personal toys at home or in the car. These items distract her from her pursuits in the classroom, and can be lost at broken at school.**

## ❖ Food Services

**If your child has a particular food allergy or food need, please let us know!**

**Snack will be provided by the school.** Snack time becomes part of the child's Practical Life Experience. They will serve their own snack, learn to clean up afterward and socialize with friends. Our snacks are nutritious with a variety of organic grains balanced with organic fruits, vegetables and protein items. A snack menu will be posted in the school each month.

**A nutritious hot lunch will be provided Monday through Thursday for those students signed up.** Children will help set the table, and clean up. They will be encouraged to try a variety of foods. Balanced meals with organic fresh fruits, vegetables, grains and protein items will be cooked and served. A lunch menu will be posted in the school each month.

Because we try to maintain as healthy an environment as we possible, we serve non-GMO containing foods and 95% of all foods served are organically grown. Our cleaning products are as "eco friendly" as possible.

The school does not use pesticides for any purpose. If the situation arises that we would need to use a pesticide for any reason, parents will be notified before use and directions will be followed in a responsible and safe manner according to the licensing requirements of the Pesticide Application Act.

### ❖ Birthdays and Holidays

We have a special ceremony for birthdays. You are invited to send along photos and a sentence of what your child was doing at each of their previous birthdays (such as walking, living in a certain place, favorite books, etc.) to include it our celebration.

While we tend to "downplay" the general uproar that comes with many holidays, we do acknowledge these celebrations and offer a number of holiday related projects to the children. Please contact us if you wish to have your child be exempt from these activities.

### ❖ Classroom Pets

This year, we have no classroom pets.

#### Visiting Pet Policy:

Occasionally children like to bring in pets from home to show their classmates. If your child would like to bring in a pet, you must talk to Tom or Teresa to set up a time. We have found that it works best to bring the pet either during group time at the end of class or during outside to playtime. The children will wash hands after handling the animals. The animals must have the required shots and be gentle around children. This year we have several children who are fearful of dogs, therefore the best time to bring them is when we are outside and the children can choose to be near them or not.

### ❖ Discipline In Our School

The children have simple ground rules to follow while in the classroom and outdoors. These are presented to the children on the first day of school and are verbally repeated by the teachers in simple lessons and dramatized by teachers and children in small groups to reinforce their importance. These include not harming yourself, not harming others, respecting their work, respecting the environment, learning to use words to solve problems, and walking up to a teacher or fellow student when speaking to them. These ground rules are fundamental at the Orcas Montessori School because they signify the mutual respect that is essential if there is to be a classroom full of free children, busy fulfilling their individual needs. These rules also free the teacher to attend to one child at a time.

If a child in the classroom is disruptive, he will be redirected to an activity that will hold his interest. If he is unable to focus, he will accompany the teacher or an assistant in whatever activity they are presenting until the child is ready to work by himself again. If a child hurts others, he will be given a respectful, related consequence for his behavior. Children who bite others will be sent home for the day. If a child's unacceptable behavior continues as an issue over a period of time and interferes in the working of the classroom, parents will be asked to attend a conference and problem solve together with the faculty. The staff is dedicated to kindness and consistency. We do reserve the right to terminate enrollment at our discretion.

### **❖ Health and Safety**

Every precaution will be taken to insure your child's safety, and she will be given clear safety instructions and limits. The children will be shown how to wash their hands after every bathroom use, before snack and mealtime , and upon coming in from outside play. Your support of this good health behavior at home will establish a necessary lifelong habit.

Because the health of all of our children and staff is important, you must keep your child home at the onset of a cold, 24 hours after your child's temperature returns to normal after a fever, 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea, profuse or colored nasal discharge, frequent sneezing, head lice, or symptoms of communicable diseases. Please allow your child the luxury of staying home if he is unusually fussy, cranky or tired or just not himself. If not, you must leave us a phone number where you can be reached if it becomes obvious that your child is ill. If your child is obviously ill upon arrival, please be prepared to take them with you. If your child becomes ill while at school, you or an authorized person (if you can not be reached) will be notified immediately. Parents are required to sign a Medical Release consenting Orcas Montessori School to administer first aid and/ or authorize a medical doctor to examine or treat your child in case of medical emergency while he is in attendance at Orcas Montessori School or on a school field trip. Administration of medications to children will only be given by the school with a doctor's written authorization AND the written, signed directions of a parent or guardian.

### **Disaster Policy**

Please take the time to review the disaster plan posted If you have any questions, please talk to Teresa.

### **Immunization Requirements**

Health records are due when you enroll your child. Children without current immunization forms will not be admitted to class until they are updated. If your child is not immunized against a particular disease and there is an outbreak of that disease, you may be asked to keep your child at home until the period determined by the health department has passed.

### **School Responsibility**

All staff members are mandated reporters; meaning that we are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to Children's' Protective Services.

# Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is vital to the operation and success of our school. Your commitment and participation at your child's school demonstrates your support to them. We ask parents to become involved in the following ways:

1. **Communicating with the Staff.** Please feel free to discuss any questions and concerns you may have. We have the interests of your child foremost. If we are not able to talk at that moment, we will be happy to call you later during the day or after school. If your child experiences difficulties at drop off, we will call you later with a progress report and don't mind if you call at any time to inquire how they are.
2. **Observing and attending Parent Teacher Conferences.** We schedule two parent observations and conferences per year for you to see the class in action and to discuss your individual child's progress. We also schedule a winter and spring conference to discuss your child's progress.
3. **Attending Parent Education Nights.** These are scheduled four times during the school year to familiarize parents with the Montessori Method and philosophy and facilitate their understanding and ability to support what is going on in the classroom. The first meeting, an orientation is mandatory. Parents are encouraged to ask questions and use the opportunity to network with other parents. Free childcare is provided.
4. **Attending our Spring Open House.** This enjoyable Saturday afternoon gives children the opportunity to show their parents around the classroom and demonstrate their favorite activities to them.
5. **Volunteer your help.** Tuition only covers about 65% of our operating expenses. Our Fundraising and maintenance committees play an essential role in keeping our program operating. Parents are needed to take a major role in at least one of our fundraising events and a minor role in another. These include the wreath sale, the auction, pie and bake sales. In addition to these fundraisers, we need someone to take on managing the garden and someone the grounds and other parents to help by taking responsibility for maintaining one area. Our aging building always needs maintenance work and repairs. Maintaining the children's environment is vital to a successful Montessori School. Parents are required to volunteer 30 hours per school year. If unable to perform a duty they have volunteered for, parents must call ahead of time to make other arrangements and make up volunteer hours where needed.

## **Financial Issues**

### **Tuition**

Tuition is an annual fee. The tuition schedule may be found on the enrollment form. A 5% discount will be given to those families who would like to pay their tuition in full by June 1<sup>st</sup> prior to the school year. A 3% discount is given if the year's tuition is paid in full by Sept 15<sup>th</sup>. Tuition is to be paid on a monthly basis on or before the first of each month. Unless prior arrangements are made tuition payments made after the 10th of the month will be raised \$15 for the month. In the event that your child will be gone for an extended period, your tuition payment must still be paid in full in order to maintain her space in the school.

### **Tuition Assistance**

Work study is available for families to perform work in exchange for some of the monthly tuition. This needs to be arranged with the director. We participate in the ECEAP and DSHS Working Connections programs and will take applications for scholarship aid. We encourage families to apply for aid in the spring or upon enrollment. An application is available from the director. Parents applying for ECEAP and Working Connections also need to fill out an application for enrollment in the school.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Orcas Montessori is a non-profit, organization dedicated to the education of the young child according to the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. All children from 2 1/2 to 6 are encouraged to apply for enrollment regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religious preference, sex, or disability.