

*Mt. Tahoma Montessori School
Parent Handbook*



*2024–2025
School Year*

Parent Handbook

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Mt. Tahoma Montessori School Parent Handbook



Our Mission

The Child

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School strives to meet the needs of the whole child; nurturing the love of learning, creating opportunities for growth and independence, and bringing about self-respect and positive self-worth.

The Environment

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School creates an environment that is clean, safe, nurturing, and carefully prepared to provide positive learning experiences. Our natural setting is an important part of our Montessori curriculum.

The Community

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School strives to create a positive, caring atmosphere for parents and their children to flourish and grow. Our focus is to nurture, respect, and have an understanding for each other, nature, and our planet.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Childcare is provided to any family regardless of race, creed, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or physical, mental, or sensory disability.

What We Believe

**Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is dedicated in following Dr. Maria Montessori's philosophy and methodology.*

**Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is a hands-on, multi aged, developmentally appropriate, independent learning environment for children.*

**Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is dedicated to teaching the skills of responsibility, self-discipline, and independence.*

**Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is a parent-oriented school; realizing that you, the parent, are your child's most important teacher.*

Emergency Procedures

We have established an out of area contact in the event of an earthquake or major disaster. If the local phone lines are out of commission, this number will be used to relay information about the school's condition. Please use it only when absolutely necessary. Mike Adams is Kim Adam's brother-in-law and lives in Texas.

Mike & Lona Adams: 512-388-2042

In the case of a major emergency, we have all the items usually included in an emergency comfort kit here at school. As an additional comfort for your child, please make sure there is a photo of your family in your child's classroom.

Please make sure your child always has a change of clothes available at school. Always let the office know if your phone numbers, emergency numbers, or contact people change. This way we will always be able to reach you in a true emergency.

SNOW CLOSURE or other weather emergencies

We follow the Federal Way School District. If Federal Way schools are closed, we are closed. If Federal Way schools are two hours late, we will open for all classes at 11:00 a.m. If your child is in an AM half day student, and we are two hours late, class will be cancelled. School closure information can be found on the TV and/or the radio.

**Information will be sent out via email and Facebook.*

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

If a child should require emergency treatment, the following steps would be taken:

- 1.) Staff who are trained in First Aid and CPR will attend to the child.*
- 2.) A call to 911 or the hospital will be made.*
- 3.) Parents will be notified. If parents are unable to be reached staff will then call emergency contacts.*

School Day times

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Daily class schedules are posted in each class.

School starts promptly at 9:00am. Please respect your child by being on time. Your child may miss important presentations or lessons when arriving late. Many children feel uncomfortable coming into the classroom after activities have begun. If you arrive after the beginning of class time, please say your good-byes at the door allowing your child to enter quietly.

The school will release your child only to an authorized adult. Please inform the office in writing anytime an adult other than yourself will be picking up your child. Anyone new will be asked to show proper identification before the child is released.

STUDENT DROP OFF AND PICK UP

All children and parents must say their good-byes at the gate before our staff lets the student in for the school day. This procedure is to ensure the health and safety of all our students and families.

All children must be picked up by 4:00 p.m. Any child picked up after 4:00 p.m. will be charged a \$1.00 per minute late fee. Please communicate with your child's teacher if there are any changes to your child's schedule.

SHUTTLE

- 1. Enter the parking lot from the north driveway.*
- 2. Pull forward to the next available parking space.*
- 3. Exit through the south driveway.*

SAFETY TIPS

- *Never leave children alone in a car.*
- *Always turn off your engine and lock your car when parking.*
- *Only staff or parents may open the gate*
- *All children must have a proper seating arrangement in the vehicle according to state law.*
- *Please hold your child's hand in the parking lot.*

PLEASE DO NOT BLOCK DRIVEWAY.

ILLNESS

Keep your child home if any of these symptoms are present:

- * Fever*
- *Vomiting*
- *Diarrhea*
- *Unexplained rashes*
- *Bad congestion or a runny nose*
- *Listlessness*
- *Weeping eyes*
- *Just not feeling well.*

A child showing symptoms of illness will be isolated and you will be contacted to come and pick up your child.

Children may not return to school until temperature is normal for 24 hours, per King County Health Department regulations.

Please notify the school when your child contracts a contagious disease (mumps, chicken pox, measles, head lice, impetigo, pink eye, etc.) so that other parents can be notified. *We must report contagious diseases to the King County Health Department.*

MEDICATION

Any medication: oral or topical, prescription to be given to a child while at school must be authorized by signing an Authorization Medication Form. All medication will be given to your child's teacher. All medication will be stored in a locked box and refrigerated, as needed.

Any medications brought by parents for their children must include:

- *Original container*
- *Child's name*
- *Date (if prescription medicine)*
- *Directions to administer the medication*
- *Name of physician prescribing medication*

NUTRITION

Good nutrition is encouraged. A selection of fruits or vegetables, proteins, and carbohydrates are recommended for snacks and lunches.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day for your child. Food consumed at breakfast greatly affects your child's ability to focus and fully participate in the activities of the day. A nutritious, protein-filled breakfast might include eggs, meat, whole wheat bread, peanut butter, cheese, or whole grain cereal. Breakfast is the fuel that propels learning in the morning.

Snacks are provided by parent volunteers or by the school. We encourage the consumption of water at snack time and throughout the day. Each class sends home a monthly snack calendar with snack suggestions and your child's scheduled snack day. DO NOT SEND CANDY. LIMIT SWEETS TO BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS.

LUNCH

A protein-filled lunch with grain breads and fruits or vegetables will supply the needed energy to fuel your child for the rest of the day. PLEASE DO NOT SEND SODA/CANDY. Please provide an ice pack to avoid food spoilage. Uneaten food will be sent home, enabling you to see what foods and amounts your child is consuming. Teachers will share any changes in eating habits and are good resources for lunch ideas!

PARENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Volunteer service time is a source of providing necessary support and services to the community that is guiding and nurturing your child. Each classroom needs parent volunteers for the following activities:

Food prep— Each classroom needs a parent volunteer to bring five of the following:

- *Apples*
- *Bananas*
- *Oranges*
- *Bread*

Laundry — We are trying to reduce our footprint on this earth and one of the ways is by using towels to wash and dry our hands. One parent is needed each day of the week to pick up the laundry from your child's class.

DRESS CODE

**All clothing must be child manageable, respecting the child's quest for independence.*

**Weather appropriate outerwear. All children go outdoors in inclement weather. Slip-on rubber boots are an excellent choice for most of the school year.*

**No tie shoes please, until your child can independently manage to tie his/her own shoes.*

**Indoor shoes; canvas (for wash ability) and rubber soled (for safety). Aqua socks work well.*

**Label all clothing with the child's name, including outerwear, footwear, and extra clothing.*

NAP TIME

Full day students have the opportunity to rest and/or nap according to their individual needs. You and your child's teacher may assess the specific needs of the child.

Nap items: (label all items with your child's name)

- *Crib-sized blanket*
- *Fitted crib sheet.*
- *Pillowcase in which to store items.*

TOILET LEARNING

Children at the end of the process of toilet learning will need cloth underwear and several changes of clothing. No diapers or pull-ups please. Your child's teachers are willing to work with you and your child during the last stages of this important growth step.

CELEBRATIONS

Our environment is a place of tranquility for your child. The anticipation of holiday events can be stressful for young children. We choose to have quiet recognition of holidays. We examine holidays from a cultural standpoint. We do not practice any specific religious beliefs; however, we do encourage building values such as honesty, integrity, respect, independence, and responsibility. We also encourage families to come and share their traditions with us.

Your child's birthday is recognized in several ways:

- * A ceremony honoring the passage of time and growth. Pictures from home can be used noting birth and year of life.*

**A paper crown noting the special occasion.*

**If you wish to send edible treats, please consult your child's teacher before the event to check for food allergies.*

If you are planning a party in recognition of your child's birthday, please use the School Directory to mail the invitations and thank you notes.

PET POLICY

Pet Policy – Upon getting a pet for a classroom a letter informing the parents of the pet will be sent home. The letter will include:

- If the children have access to the animal.*
- How the children will be kept safe.*
- If the animal needs to have immunizations.*
- If the children will be handling the pet or caring for its waste.*

COMMUNICATION

We usually rely on e-mail for our outgoing communication purposes. Please make sure we have an up-to-date e-mail address on file with us. If you do not use e-mail, please let us know so you can receive paper copies.

mttahomaschool@gmail.com

CONFERENCES

Two Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled each school year: one in November and one in March. You are encouraged to speak to your child's teacher whenever you have a question or concern.

EVALUATIONS

A written report describing your child's growth and progress will be sent home at the end of your child's kindergarten year. The three-year cycle of your child's Montessori experience is recorded in increasing levels of detail noting changing growth. The development of the whole child is our primary focus. Evaluation is based on the Foundation Blocks for Learning.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All children have the right to be safe.

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is dedicated to teaching peace and nonviolence. We use litany that states, "This is a place of peace; a place where everyone can feel safe; a place of non-violence and no weapons." We utilize verbal conflict resolution, working from a standpoint of respect; for ourselves, for others, and for the environment.

All children have the right to work undisturbed.

Montessori teachers are trained to guide the child towards independence. The class environment is carefully arranged to promote independent work. A climate of respecting another person's right to concentrate indicates redirecting the disturbing child gently toward his or her own work choices. "Watchers" may silently stand observing. Social interaction is encouraged and involves children who are mutually interacting.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING LAW

We are required by Washington State law and licensing agencies to immediately report to the police or Child Protective Services any instance where there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or exploitation.

We may not be able to notify parents when the police or Child Protective Services are called about possible child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, depending upon the recommendation of Child Protective Services.

WEAPONS POLICY

We have a strict no weapons policy. Guns, knives, anything that we deem could be used as a weapon is prohibited from school grounds. If a child brings any such item to school, he or she will be sent home immediately and will be suspended from school until a medical professional determines the nature of the child's intent can perform a formal evaluation.

DISCIPLINE

Positive discipline and redirection are the techniques used by the Mt. Tahoma Staff. Most situations are resolved with no further action.

When a continuing disharmonious behavioral situation needs further action, the following steps will be taken:

- 1. The Director will be called to observe and give guidance for resolution of disharmonious behavioral situations. The parents will be notified and asked to work as a team with the teacher and director to assist the child.*
- 2. Continuing disharmonious behavior may result in the director asking the parent to temporarily remove the child while the parents, teacher, and director discuss a course of action that will aid the child in functioning peacefully and cooperatively.*
- 3. Unresolved behavior challenges may necessitate outside professional evaluation.*
- 4. If no resolution is reached, the director may request the child's withdrawal from school.*

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School Administration strongly discourages gossip and encourages the immediate and direct approach to resolving situations.

- *Parents with concerns or questions regarding their child need to go directly to their child's teacher.*
- *If the concern persists the parent may contact the administrators and set up a conference.*
- *Parent, teacher, and administrators will work together to bring a resolution of the concern.*
- *If no resolution can be reached, the enrollment contract may be terminated.*

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School encourages and promotes continued professional growth and development for all staff. Staff are trained in first-aid, CPR, HIV, and are required by law to report signs of child abuse or neglect to CPS. Head Teachers hold Montessori Certifications and participate in STARS/MERIT education programs, sponsored by Department of Early Learning (DEL). To assure excellence and quality for our children, the school provides teachers:

- *Funding for memberships in professional organizations.*
- *In-service training within our school environment.*
- *Paid release time to attend professional conferences.*
- *Paid release time to observe other school environments.*

ACCREDITATION AND MEMBERSHIPS

Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is staffed with certified teachers that earned their certification from training programs approved and accredited by

- *Montessori Accreditation Commission for Teacher Education (MACTE) which is recognized by the Federal Bureau of Education. Mt. Tahoma Montessori School is licensed by the Department of Early Learning.*
- *Pacific Northwest Montessori Association, PNMA*

HOW WE ARE GOING TO SUCCEED

Our goal is for your child to:

- *Joyfully embrace life.*
- *Be responsible for actions and make good choices.*
- *Be confident – by succeeding at meaningful goals.*
- *Be a lifelong learner.*
- *To have integrity and contribute to society.*

Mt. Tahoma Montessori is a partnership of parents, dedicated Montessori Teachers and assistants working in a positive environment for the well-being of your children.

FOUNDATION BLOCKS FOR LEARNING

Order, Concentration, Coordination, and Independence are attributes of personal growth. These Foundation Blocks pave the way for all future academic achievement.

**When a child has a good sense of ORDER, he/she is able to organize his/her time, materials, and mind so that he/she may analyze what to do, how to do it, and ultimately, he/she can move on to accomplishing the task.*

**When a child can CONCENTRATE, he/she is able to focus on a particular task or work for an extended length of time. The need to focus or concentrate is vital to engage the mind and body in the most abstract work of academic endeavors.*

**When a child has the COORDINATION necessary to handle writing tools, and the ability of controlling his/her body movements, he/she may be ready to do the work of written communication.*

**When a child has gained INDEPENDENCE, he/she is empowered to be a person with a strong sense of self-worth. The ability to make decisions, to see what one needs, and to be internally motivated are powerful tools for self-growth and fulfillment.*

Developmental Needs of The Three to Six-Year-Old

Birth to six years is the most important age development for your child. Before he/she comes to us at age three, you have witnessed so many important events from watching your child learn to crawl and walk to acquiring knowledge of the English language. By the time your child enters our school, the synapses of the brain are growing and expanding like wildfire. Everything is exciting. Everything is new. The child is driven to learn all he/she can about the environment around him/her.

Montessori noticed that at certain ages children seem open and ready to learn specific things that appeal to their driving need to know. She called these sensitive periods. This is when a child's body, brain, and total being, are ready to absorb all that the environment can teach. The child is like a little sponge soaking up information and knowledge. The rich environment of the Montessori primary classroom contains specialized materials to satisfy the child's thirst for knowledge during these sensitive periods while the synapses of the brain continue to grow.

Each classroom is divided into four main areas: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, and Math. In addition, each classroom has an art area, geography materials, and ever-changing science materials that explore botany, zoology, astronomy, physical science, and more. Teachers follow the child and work into their curriculum answers to all the questions the children ask. Technical names are taught as the child searches for the truth about everything in the world around him/her.

*The **Practical Life** area contains materials that teach the child how to pour, spoon, use utensils, tweeze, cut, and clean. The child learns how to perfect dressing skills through the use of button frames, zipper frames, buckle and tying frames etc. He/she washes everything from snack preparation dishes to shelves and windows. The materials in this area teach the child how to care for his/her personal needs and be more useful and independent around the house. The child learns to clean up after him/herself and take pride in the classroom. Sequencing skills are acquired that can be applied to other areas of the classroom such as reading and math. Many activities involve developing pincer skills (three fingers) that lead to learning how to grip the pencil for writing work. The young child fulfills many sensitive needs in this area of the*

classroom. Perfection of these skills leads to independence, confidence, and responsibility.

The **Sensorial** area contains materials that appeal to the child's needs to develop the senses. Maria Montessori specifically designed many of the materials as she watched the children and realized their needs. This area of the classroom grows with the child. The Knobbed Cylinders are self-controlling for the youngest child who works to find the proper place for each cylinder on the cylinder block. By the time the child is in the third year (Kindergarten), all four-cylinder blocks are positioned into a square and are manipulated at the same time to create a big challenge. The Pink Tower and the Brown Stair teach the children not only how to build, but how to discriminate between height, depth, width, and weight. As the child grows, extensions are added to create more challenges and further his/her understanding. Additional sensorial (sensory developing) materials are three Color Boxes that range from simple matching of the primary colors to 7-part gradation of the primary and secondary colors. There are Touching Boards (sandpaper) and Fabric-Sorting to develop the sense of touch; Tasting Bottles to develop the taste buds; Thermic Bottles to discriminate temperature. Sound Cylinders train the ear for future reading and music endeavors. Physical coordination develops with understanding of concepts, laying the foundation for future math work.

Language begins with the "Sounds of the Week". Students are introduced to short vowel and consonant sounds at circle time or in individual or small group lessons. Each week they talk about things that begin with the "Sound of the Week". They bring "Show and Tell" items that begin with the "Sound of the Week". They practice writing the sound in the sand box after first feeling and tracing the sandpaper letter. Many independent works can be found on the shelves in this area to reinforce learning of the sounds. Older children transfer that knowledge to other writing and pre-reading works on the shelf. Reading is a phonetic approach. Many children are reading by their third or Kindergarten year. Writing progresses hand-in-hand as the child's knowledge expands.

Math is a very concrete learning process in the Montessori classroom. There are many counting activities. Children learn the relationship between the quantities and their correlating symbols. They work with the teens and tens developing understanding of numbers to 100 and beyond. They learn math processes through the use of "Golden Beads" material that allows concrete learning of four-digit addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Place value and memorization of math facts are built into the program making understanding

easy because of the hands-on, concrete approach. They also work on memorization of simple math facts. Geometry also has a place in the Montessori classroom as children manipulate geometric solids and planes as well as learn the proper names.

The primary program and its curriculum develop over the course of the three years the child spends in the classroom. It is so important that the child be allowed to experience the Montessori environment for the full three years. Each three-year cycle of life builds upon the previous cycle and continues to cycle through the child's life into adulthood. The first year of each cycle is one of hesitation, shyness, and yet excitement as one is introduced to new beginnings. The second year holds more confidence and is a building year. The third year is one of mastery as learning and understanding come together for the child. And then the cycle begins anew.

The three-year-old enters the classroom with wide eyes to all the possibilities. The sensitive needs dictate the areas the child needs to work in. He is always working towards perfection and building his/her skills. This age child has a strong need for order. She/he is always aware of the smallest changes in the classroom. She notices new earrings the first day the teacher wears them. The three-year-old usually works independent of the other children, wanting to do everything without help, not really needing social interaction. Often, he/she is content to simply watch others work, quietly absorbing the knowledge for future reference.

The four-year-old enters the classroom with confidence and excitement. Gone is the newness of the previous year. He rushes into the classroom to announce to his teachers "I'm back!" This is a year of building upon previously acquired knowledge. The driving need of the year before settles into determined work of the contented child. He knows the boundaries and expectations and can see where he's been (as a three-year-old) and where he wants to go (as a five-year-old). She looks up to the third-year students and wants to learn how to read and do all the things those older students can do. Socialization becomes important as the child explores emotions and friendship.

The third year or Kindergarten year is one of completion. The child masters all areas of work. He becomes the leader; the ones others look up to for support and guidance. The kindergarten children become little teachers as they help the little one's tie shoes and put on their coats for recess. They love to read to their younger counterparts. Math and language and writing work take up the

majority of their day. Many kindergarten children who have spent the first two years coming just half-day to school, increase their day to full time so that they can experience the social time of lunch and have more time to develop their skills in the afternoon.

The best way to sum up the three years process may be to look at each year in terms of: *Watcher, Worker, and Teacher*. The three-year-old is a *Watcher* absorbing everything going on in the environment. The four-year-old is a *worker* who confidently moves through the material he/she so carefully observed the year before. The five-year-old is the *Teacher* who is mastering all the works, teaching others, and combining and applying his knowledge to bigger endeavors (writing stories to go with the picture he/she created, taking pride in his/her ability to move from the concrete to abstract with some math works, etc.).

SUGGESTED READING LIST FOR PARENTS

Building Cathedrals Not walls: Essays for Parents and Teachers by Maren Schmidt, M.Ed.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Montessori Madness: A Parent-to-Parent Argument for Montessori Education by Trevor Eissler

Parenting with Love & Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility by Foster Cline & Jim Fay

Understanding Montessori by Maren Schmidt, M.Ed.

The Absorbent Mind by Dr. Maria Montessori

Secret of Childhood by Dr. Maria Montessori

The Montessori Method by Dr. Maria Montessori

Children – The Challenge by Rudolf Driekurs

Positive Discipline – The Preschool Years by Jane Nelson

Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World by Jan Nelson



