

ESCUELA MONTESSORI DEL VALLE

# 2017- 2018 Information Package

*El Paso's Premier  
Montessori  
Schools*

*Since 1974*

ESCUELA MONTESSORI  
DEL VALLE

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Fostering a lifelong joy of learning by providing a happy, nurturing and stimulating Montessori environment where each child is able to develop academically, emotionally and socially to their greatest potential.

**Voted 2006 "El Paso's Best Preschool"**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to Escuela Montessori del Valle, serving El Paso's children for 43 years! Our school provides an exceptional early childhood education based on the philosophy and method developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, in a loving, safe, family-friendly setting. Owned and operated since 1974 by the Filley Family, our mission is to foster a lifelong love of learning in a happy, nurturing, and stimulating Montessori environment, where each child is able to develop academically, emotionally, and socially to their greatest potential.

## **History**

Escuela Montessori del Valle was the first Montessori school in El Paso, founded in 1974 by Marti Filley. The original classroom was in an existing building located behind her one-acre Upper Valley residence. After the first year, enrollment had increased from 15 to 45 students and it was necessary to expand the school to meet the demand. Construction on our first custom-designed school building was completed in 1976, and soon after, two more buildings were added to the school complex.

Escuela Montessori continued to grow and thrive for many years. In response to parents' requests to continue the Montessori program through the Elementary level, land next to the 212 W. Sunset property was purchased in 1996 for the specific purpose of developing a beautiful, state of the art Elementary facility. The new expansion enabled the school to offer a continuous Montessori education from Toddlers through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Consequently, many of our families have been able to keep their children in the school for their entire Toddler through Elementary experience.

In 1981, the school made the decision to expand to a new location in the Coronado area, thus making it possible to meet the educational needs of many more children. Coronado Montessori has also experienced tremendous growth over the years, and currently enrolls children eighteen months through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade. Together, Escuela Montessori and Coronado Montessori enjoy a reputation as the premier private schools on the Westside.

In 2003, plans were made to add a third location to our family of schools. Sun Country Montessori was developed on the far-Eastside of the city to meet the demand for quality private education. The school offers classes for toddlers through kindergarten, as well as before and after school care. Sun Country Montessori also has a year-round Summer Program for those families who need continual care.

## **Environment**

Escuela Montessori del Valle is located on 1 ½ acres in El Paso's lush Upper Valley. The buildings and playgrounds are nestled amidst pecan and fruit trees, as well as a variety of gardens. In addition, the barnyard is home to various farm animals. The proximity to neighboring pastures enhances the beautiful country atmosphere. An important part of the Montessori curriculum is learning about nature and the child's relationship to his/her environment. At our school, children have daily opportunities to help care for the plants, animals, and gardens, all of which helps make our unique learning environment so appealing.

## **Program**

Conveniently located on El Paso's beautiful Westside, Escuela Montessori offers both half and full-day classes for children eighteen months through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition to the excellent academic program, we also provide quality before and after-school care in a loving and safe environment for those families who need extra hours. Escuela Montessori is open all summer to meet the needs of those families that require ongoing care in our continuing Summer Program.

## **Staff**

Mrs. Filley relies on over fifty years of teaching experience to assemble a staff of the highest caliber. She is a certified Montessori teacher and also holds a lifetime elementary education credential from the State of California. In addition, she earned a Master of Education degree from the University of Texas at El Paso where she was recognized as “Outstanding Graduate Student” in 1990. Every lead teacher at Escuela Montessori has formal Montessori certification and all staff members receive ongoing professional education. Mrs. Filley has also conducted accredited Montessori training workshops for teachers and assistants.

## **Future**

The future of Escuela Montessori is bright! During 2017 we are planning further expansion at all three schools which will further enable us to provide a superior Montessori education for the children of the entire El Paso region.

# THE PURPOSE OF A MONTESSORI EDUCATION

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. He must do it himself or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years he spends in the classroom because he is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt, therefore, that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate his own natural desire to learn.

In the Montessori classroom, this objective is approached in two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his own choice, rather than by being forced; and second, by helping him to perfect all his natural tools for learning, so that his ability will be at a maximum in future learning situations. The Montessori materials have this dual long-range purpose in addition to their immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child.

## How the Children Learn

The use of materials is based on the young child's unique aptitude for learning. Identified by Dr. Montessori as the "absorbent mind" in her writings, she frequently compared the young mind to a sponge. It literally absorbs information from the environment. The process is particularly evident in the way in which, a two-year-old learns his native language, without formal instruction and without the conscious, tedious effort, which an adult must make to master a foreign tongue. Acquiring information in this way is a natural and delightful activity for the young child who employs all his senses to investigate his interesting surroundings.

Since the child retains this ability to learn by absorbing until he is almost seven years old, Dr. Montessori reasoned that his experience could be enriched by a classroom where he could handle materials, which would demonstrate basic educational information to him. Over sixty years of experience have proved her theory that a young child can learn to read, write, and calculate in the same natural way that he learns to walk and talk. In a Montessori classroom, the equipment invites him to do this at his own periods of interest and readiness.

Dr. Montessori always emphasized that the hand is the chief teacher of the child. In order to learn, there must be concentration, and the best way a child can concentrate is by fixing his attention on some task he is performing with his hands. (The adult habit of doodling is a remnant of this practice.) All the equipment in a Montessori classroom allows the child to reinforce his casual impressions by inviting him to use his hands for learning.

## The Importance of the Early Years

In The Absorbent Mind, Dr. Montessori wrote: "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. For that is the time when man's intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed. But not only his intelligence, the full totality of his psychic powers. . . At no other age has the child greater need of an intelligent help, and any obstacle that impedes his creative work will lessen the chance he has of achieving perfection."

Recent psychological studies based on controlled research have confirmed these theories of Dr. Montessori. After analyzing thousands of such studies, Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom of the University of Chicago wrote, in Stability and Change in Human Characteristics, "From conception to age 4, the individual develops 50% of his mature intelligence; from ages 4 to 8, he develops another 30%. This would suggest the very rapid growth of intelligence in the early years and the possible great influence of the early environment on this development."

Like Dr. Montessori, Dr. Bloom believes "that the environment will have maximum impact on a specific trait during that trait's period of most rapid growth." As an extreme example, a starvation diet would not affect the height of an 18-year-old, but could severely retard the growth of a one-year-old baby. Since 80% of the child's mental development takes place before he is eight years old, the importance of favorable conditions during these years can hardly be overemphasized.

## Sensitive Periods

Another observation of Dr. Montessori's, which has been reinforced by modern research, is the importance of the sensitive periods for early learning. These are periods of intense fascination for learning a particular characteristic or skill, such as going up and down steps, putting things in order, counting, or reading. It is easier for the child to learn a particular skill during the corresponding period than at any other time in his life. The Montessori classroom takes advantage of this fact by allowing the child freedom to select individual activities, which correspond to his own periods of interest.

## At What Ages?

Although the entrance age varies in individual schools, a child can usually enter a Montessori classroom between the ages of 2 and 4 years, depending on when he can be happy and comfortable in a classroom situation. He will begin with the simplest exercises based on activities, which all children enjoy. The equipment which he uses at three and four will help him to develop the concentration, coordination, and working habits necessary for the more advanced exercises he will perform at five and six. The entire program of learning is purposefully structured. Therefore, optimum results cannot be expected either for a child who misses the early years of the cycle, or for one who is withdrawn before he finishes the basic materials described here.

Parents should understand that a Montessori school is neither a baby-sitting service nor a play school that prepares a child for traditional education. Rather, it is a unique cycle of learning designed to take advantage of the child's sensitive years between three and six, when he can absorb information from an enriched environment. A child who acquires the basic skills of reading and arithmetic in this natural way has the advantage of beginning his education without drudgery, boredom, or discouragement. By pursuing his individual interests in a Montessori classroom, he gains an early enthusiasm for learning, which is the key to his becoming a truly educated person.

# THE MONTESSORI PROGRAM

## Practical Life Exercises

The child is attracted to activities that give him independence and control of his own life. A most important need of the young child is to develop his muscles and coordinate his movement through such Practical Life Exercises as sweeping, polishing, carrying water, pouring, and washing a table. Special Montessori materials enable him to tie, button, snap, and use many other fastening devices. The purpose of these exercises is to develop concentrations, to pay attention to detail as the child follows a regular sequence of actions, and to learn good working habits as he finishes each task and puts away all materials before going on to another activity. These activities provide the very foundation on which the child approaches more intricate academic exercises. The Practical Life Exercises are of greatest significance during the ages 2~ to 4 years, although the advanced exercises continue to play an important role in the classroom through age 6.

## Sensorial Exercises

Sensorial Materials in the Montessori classroom are designed to sharpen the senses of the young child and to enable him to understand the many impressions he receives through them. Each of the Sensorial Materials isolates one defining quality, such as color, weight, shape, texture, size, sound, and smell. Sound boxes, for example, are all the same size, shape, color, and texture; they differ only in the sounds, which are made when the child shakes them. Other Sensorial Materials include geometric solids, smelling jars, color tablets, temperature jugs, sandpaper letters, baric tablets, cylinder blocks, etc.

The Montessori Sensorial Materials help the child to distinguish, to categorize, and to relate new information to what he already knows. The child finds a sense of order in these materials and acquires the joy of learning that his environment has order. His intellect is trained to make order out of a multitude of experiences, which is the learning process.

Through the Practical Life and Sensorial Materials Exercises, a young child develops the sensory awareness and concentration and attention span that prepare him for the academic subjects.

## Mathematics

The materials for mathematics introduce the concept of quantity and the symbols for quantity: the numbers 1 through 10. The quantity is introduced initially by a series of rods, which the child can count and compare. He matches sets of symbol cards with the rods. Using a variety of beads and symbol cards, the child becomes familiar with the numbers as a decimal system including concrete experiences with the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. These exercises not only teach the child to calculate, but they provide a deep understanding of how numbers function. He learns concrete mathematical concepts and the materials lead him to the abstract, so that his understanding has substance. Because of the concrete nature of the materials, the child is able to work with basics of fractions and geometry.

## Language

According to Dr. Montessori, the evolution of language begins with the infant's unique capacity to absorb intact fragments of language, which will serve as a basis for his development. This continues through an orderly, unconscious process of assimilation and abstraction. The child first discovers that sounds have meaning, and then he isolates the parts of speech. Finally, he grasps the use of sentences. The constant assimilation of language results in a sudden expansion of vocabulary.

The child learns the oral language naturally--he automatically takes it from his environment. The work of the teacher is to expose him to the equivalent forms of written language, which he learns through the same general pattern of development.

The Montessori child begins reading when he is ready, and he proceeds at his own pace. His experiences in practical life and sensorial education serve as a preparation for this.

While it may be possible to teach some children to read at ages 2 to 3 years, using a sight or look/say method, we feel that this is generally inappropriate for the pre-school level. We believe strongly in a phonetic approach to reading, and most children are not ready or interested in internalizing phonetic rules until around age 4. Between 3 and 4, depending on each child's individual development, we introduce the child to the beginning of the reading process by use of the sandpaper letters. The sandpaper letters provide a phonetic basis for reading.

In the Montessori approach, the sounds of the letters are taught before the child is introduced to the names of the letters. Research has shown that it is best to learn one thing at a time. It is too much to have to remember both names and sounds. If the child is taught both the names and the sounds in the beginning, it has been found that the child gets confused when trying to sound out a word because it is difficult to remember which the letter represents. Therefore, to avoid the added difficulty, the phonetic sound of each letter is taught first, and the names of the letters are taught later. In addition, since some letters can represent more than one sound, the other sounds, which are not used as frequently are also taught later. In this way, the child only has to learn one sound for each letter in the beginning.

After the child has learned the sounds of all the letters, including the short vowel sounds, reading development continues in a logical, sequential order over a period of 1 to 2 years until the child is generally reading independently sometime during the Kindergarten year. Since reading is such an individual skill, most children in the same class will be working at different levels. To be allowed and encouraged to develop intellectually at his/her own pace is of lasting long-term benefit to the child.

### Sciences

It is the purpose of the Science Program to encourage the child's natural curiosity in his world, to help him learn to observe carefully, to ask questions about the phenomena he observes, to learn to experiment to find his own answers to his own questions, and to inspire in him a feeling of wonder for nature. In addition to the usual science collections and exhibits and learning to care for plants and animals, the child in a Montessori school learns how to conduct simple experiments using basic substances and apparatus. Thus, he learns not that the phenomena in nature is magic, but that science is, in reality, an investigation of his surroundings. He learns in what ways his surroundings affect him and in what ways he can control them.

### The Objectives for the Montessori Art Program

1. Development of creativity in thinking and doing.
2. To stimulate an awareness of the world around the child.
3. To foster individual expression through a wide variety of art experiences and activities.
4. To encourage growth of confidence and skill in the use of various art media.
5. To encourage group cooperation and personal responsibility in use of the materials.
6. To encourage development of a healthy self-concept through artistic expression.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Question: Why should we send our child to Escuela Montessori?

Answer: Montessori is education--not a nursery school.

The best time to start your child's education is during the early years, 2 to 6 years, when most of his intelligence and social characteristics are formed. Eighty percent of the child's mental development occurs before eight years of age. Montessori is the only proven method of education for the preschool child. Montessori is based on 65 years of patient observation of the child's nature.

2. Question: What is the Montessori Method?

Answer: Montessori is a philosophy and method of education, which emphasizes the potential of the young child and develops that potential by utilizing specially trained teachers and special teaching materials. Montessori recognizes in the child a natural curiosity and desire to learn; the Montessori materials awaken this desire and channel his curiosity into a learning experience, which the child enjoys. Montessori materials help the child to understand what he learns by associating an abstract concept with a concrete sensorial experience. In this manner, the Montessori child is actually learning and not just memorizing.

The Montessori Method stresses that children learn and progress at their own pace so that fast learners are not held back, and slower learners are not frustrated by their inability to keep up.

3. Question: Why does a Montessori child enjoy learning?

Answer: Montessori allows each child to experience the excitement of learning by his own choice, rather than by being forced. Dr. Montessori observed that it was easier for a child to learn a particular skill during the corresponding "sensitive period" than at any other time in his life. These are periods of intense fascination for learning a particular skill. Montessori allows the child freedom to select individual activities, which correspond to his own periods of interest and readiness and to progress at his own pace. A child who acquires the basic skills of reading and arithmetic in this natural way has the advantage of beginning his education without drudgery, boredom, or discouragement.

4. Question: What is the Montessori concept of discipline?

Answer: The Montessori discipline is an "inner discipline"--it is self-mastery and self-control, which the child develops over his own behavior through his interest in the Montessori materials.

Dr. Montessori noted that many children are really frustrated by a lack of proper stimulation and that they become happier and self-controlled after a period of time in a Montessori class. In a Montessori classroom, the child's energy and interest is channeled into a constructive educational activity, instead of listless or mischievous behavior.

5. Question: How does the child learn?

Answer: Children learn by absorbing experiences through the senses. A young child has an immense ability to absorb a multitude of experiences and is constantly trying to create order out of these sensorial experiences.

Dr. Montessori described the child's unique aptitude for learning as the "Absorbent Mind."

In the Montessori classroom, which is a special "prepared environment," the child finds a sense of order in every educational material with which he works and acquires the joy of



learning that his environment has order. His intellect is then trained to make order out of a multitude of experiences, which is the learning process.

6. Question: How do Montessori materials teach the child?

Answer: Dr. Montessori emphasized that children “learn through the hands.” In order to learn, there must be concentration and the best way a child can concentrate is by fixing his attention on some task he is performing with his hands.

When a child works with Montessori materials, he satisfies the innate desire of every child to handle concrete materials. Montessori materials relate abstract thoughts to sensorial experiences.

For instance, a child traces the letter “a” on sandpaper letters with his first two fingers. The repetition of this experience with all letters eventually results in a spontaneous explosion” into writing.

The concept of a cube is vividly and concretely related to a child when he handles a cube in the Montessori classroom and this sensorial experience makes a lasting imprint. In the future, when the child confronts the concept “cube” in the abstract in a mathematical problem, he understands the concept clearly because of his previous sensorial experience with the Montessori cube.

Montessori materials are self-correcting to enable the child to work with the materials without the teacher’s “constant intrusion” on his desire to find the answer himself. The child then has the tremendous joy of accomplishment when he knows that he has completed the exercise successfully.

A primary Montessori principle is that no human being is educated by another. He must learn by himself; then he will truly understand concepts and not just memorize.

7. Question: What is the role of the teacher in a Montessori classroom?

Answer: In Montessori, the role of a teacher is very different from that of a traditional teacher. That role is as an observer of individual interests and needs of each child and her daily work proceeds from her observations rather than from a prepared curriculum. The teacher carefully watches the progress of each child, in each subject, and offers individual assistance, when required. She is trained to recognize periods of readiness when the child is ready to be introduced to more advanced materials. Whenever a child makes a mistake, the teacher refrains, if possible, from intervening and allows the child to discover his error through further manipulation of the self-correcting material.

8. Question: Why are children in a Montessori classroom working at different levels?

Answer: Preschool children mature at different times and their periods of readiness for academic subjects vary a great deal. The use of individual materials permits a varied pace that accommodates many levels of ability within the classroom. Advanced children in the same room can move from one place of equipment to another very quickly, thus avoiding the boredom of waiting for other members of the class to catch up.

9. Question: Why are Montessori children generally self-confident, outgoing, and self-reliant?

Answer: Montessori is based on a profound respect for the child’s personality. The child works from his own free choice and is allowed a large measure of independence, which forms the basis of real self-discipline.

Montessori does away with the necessity of coercion by means of rewards and punishments, which often cause feelings of inferiority and stress.

As each child progresses at his own pace and successfully completes the self-correcting exercises, he develops confidence in his ability to understand his environment.

Montessori presents endless opportunities among the children for mutual help, which is joyfully given and received. Cooperative social interaction among children of different ages engenders feelings of friendship, respect for the rights of others, and self-confidence.

10. Question: Are all Montessori schools the same?

Answer: Montessori schools are very uneven in quality. We recommend that all parents who are considering a Montessori school for their children carefully investigate and visit schools in their area.

11. Question: What happens when a Montessori child transfers to other schools?

Answer: Most schools warmly welcome children from Montessori schools. The Montessori child has acquired excellent work and study habits, which result in a lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Because the Montessori child has unique qualities of self-reliance and self-discipline, he easily adjusts to the public school environment, but does not slow down his interests in the learning process and frequently becomes a social and academic leader.

# Escuela Montessori Del Valle

**Celebrating 43 Years of Excellence!**

## Fees and Tuition Schedule 2017 – 2018 School Year

| Class   | Annual Tuition | Registration | Trimester                | Monthly Payments |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Half-Day Classes (Ages 18 months – 4)<br>8:30 – 11:30 | \$5,000.00     | \$ 300.00    | \$1,666.67               | \$ 500.00        |
| Full-Day Classes (Ages 18 months – 4)<br>8:30 – 2:30  | \$ 5,750.00    | \$ 300.00    | \$1,917.00               | \$ 575.00        |
| Primary Class (Ages 5 – 6)<br>8:30 – 2:30             | \$ 5,750.00    | \$ 300.00    | \$1,917.00               | \$ 575.00        |
| Elementary Class (Grades 1-5)<br>8:30 – 3:15          | \$ 6,300.00    | \$ 350.00    | \$2,100.00               | \$ 630.00        |
| Before School Child Care                              | (7:00 – 8:30)  |              | \$105.00 per month extra |                  |
| After School Child Care                               | (3:00 – 4:00)  |              | \$105.00 per month extra |                  |
|   | (3:00 – 6:00)  |              | \$150.00 per month extra |                  |
| Before and After School                               | (7:00 – 6:00)  |              | \$200.00 per month extra |                  |

- Registration Fee:** Registration Fees are due upon receipt of application. Please note that the annual registration fee is not refundable for any reason.
- Tuition Obligation:** Upon registration, parents assume tuition liability for the **entire academic year**. A financial agreement outlining the terms and conditions must be signed.
- Tuition Payments:** For parents paying on the monthly plan, **the first monthly installment is due August 1<sup>st</sup>** and subsequent payments are due on the first of each month through May 1. The annual tuition is also payable on a trimester basis. Three equal payments are due August 1, November 1, and February 1. Payments become delinquent after the tenth of the month and a late fee of \$25.00 will be charged.
- Payment Methods:** The school accepts cash, check, money order, MasterCard, Visa, American Express and Discover cards for payment.
- Family Discounts:** Families with more than one child enrolled will receive a 10% discount on the annual tuition for each subsequent child. This discount applies only to the base tuition and is not applicable to additional hours or extended care charges.
- Military Discount:** Military and Law-Enforcement parents receive a 10% discount on the annual tuition for each child.