



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
Montessori Society

Primary Casa Program

Parent Handbook

“Educating Early...Education for Life”

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A. PROGRAM INFORMATION

1. School Hours

Primary CASA Class (3 to 5 years old)

Morning Classes: 08:30 – 11:30

Afternoon Classes: 12:30 – 03:30

Full Day: 08:30 – 03:30

Extended Hours

Early Morning Care: 07:30 – 08:30 (only at Yellowknife Montessori School location)

Lunch Supervision: 11:30 – 12:30

After School Care: 04:00 – 05:25

School closed and locked at 05:30

2. Messages and Phone Calls

All phone calls and messages should be made to the main office at 669-7987. Calls to teachers should be made before or after instruction time in the morning and afternoon, not during instructional time.

3. Attendance

Parents are asked to notify the School by phone (669-7987) when a child will be absent.

4. Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival and dismissal times must be followed. Time before class is vital for teacher preparation to ensure a smooth and productive day. Please arrive no earlier than the times designated for each session in which your child is enrolled.

The program is staffed according to the number of students registered in the extended hour programs. Dropping unregistered children off early or picking them up late will result in a \$25.00 fee for each occurrence.

Children in extended afternoon care must be picked up by 5:25 p.m. The period from 5:25 to 5:30 is for the closing of the school.

For the child's protection, we will not release any child to someone other than a parent or guardian without proper authorization from the parent or guardian.

5. Emergencies

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of illness, staff will not hesitate to seek proper care for a child. The child's individual emergency instructions on file would be consulted immediately and the parents called. At the teacher's discretion, the child may be transported to the Stanton Regional Hospital by ambulance. The consent statement that the parent signs will accompany the child so that treatment can be given immediately in the absence of the parent. It is imperative that you keep emergency contact information up-to-date.

6. Emergency Evacuation

Fire drills are held at least once a month. If an evacuation of the school is necessary for any reason, children will be taken to St. Patrick's Church. (Appropriate information for the N.J. Macpherson

class location is posted in the classroom). Evacuation procedures and maps are posted throughout both schools.

7. Lunch and nutrition

Healthy eating is crucial for learning. Parents are asked not to send junk food, candy or highly sugared food and drink in lunches.

Both the Yellowknife Montessori School and N.J. Macpherson School class locations are ***nut-free***. Do not send food items containing nuts.

All children are provided with a nutritional, well-balanced snack during the morning and afternoon sessions. Fruit juice, milk or water is provided with the snack. Water is also available all day. Snacks provided promote good eating habits as recommended by Canada's Food Guide. The menu is posted in classes.

Staff will not force a child to eat if he or she does not want to, but they will try to help the child understand the importance of eating well.

8. Medical

The Medical Release Form and Immunization Form must be completed and submitted with the Registration Package on or before the first day of school. If your child requires medication to be administered during attendance, please request and complete the Medication Log Parent Authorization Form.

Do not send your child to school if he or she is not well enough to take part in all school activities (such as outside free play, walks, extra-curricular activities, etc.) since adequate supervision will not be available.

The following is a list of symptoms to guide you in deciding whether your child should be sent to school. Do not send your child to school on days when any of the following symptoms are present:

- ❖ Fever (temperature over 98.6° F)
- ❖ Rash
- ❖ Persistent Cough
- ❖ Discolored, or profuse amounts of mucous from the nose
- ❖ Diarrhea
- ❖ Vomiting
- ❖ Sore Throat

Communicable diseases and other conditions must be reported to the School immediately.

Common communicable conditions include:

MEASLES

GERMAN MEASLES

CHICKEN POX

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINK EYE)

HEAD LICE

9. Clothing

Simple, washable, sturdy, and easy-to-manage clothes are recommended, including rubber-soled shoes. It is advisable to put your child's name on personal items, footwear and outerwear. For the

safety of your child, play and dress-up shoes are not allowed in the school as they tend to be slippery.

Each child must have a complete change of clothing in a bag at the school at all times, including underwear and socks.

10. Weather & Outdoors

At lunch, recess and after-school periods (weather permitting), the children will go outside for free play time. In addition, during the warm months, the teacher may also have structured play time as part of the program. It is important that the children have clothing suitable for outdoors. During the winter months the children will not go outside below -25 C including the wind chill (exceptions to this rule are extra-curricular programs & field trips).

11. School Outings & Student Transportation

During the course of the year, the children go on various field trips and take part in extra-curricular activities to enrich their learning experiences (past field trips have included visits to the PWNHC Museum, Legislative Assembly, grocery store, etc.) Extra-curricular activities that may be part of the school program are Gymnastics, Movement & Dance, Gym time, etc. Chartered bus lines are used to transport the children to and from events that are not within walking distance. Child car seats and booster seats are not required when traveling by bus. All field trips will be announced in advance (excluding general outings such as nature/community walks and going to the park). All children must have a signed permission form on file before participating. Field trips are chaperoned by staff and parent volunteers (if needed).

Procedures for outings are as follows:

- ❖ Emergency contact information & the first aid kit are brought on all outings.
- ❖ Attendance is taken before, during and after all outings.
- ❖ The children are paired up with a partner and are then lined up.
- ❖ To ensure the children's safety, during walks a staff member will lead the children and one will follow at the back of the line, depending on ratios there may be a third staff member. This is a perfect time for the children to learn street safety.
- ❖ When traveling by school bus the children are lined up and then escorted onto the bus. The children are to remain seated for the entire ride.

12. Bringing toys to class

Children may not bring toys to the classroom at any time. Toys tend to be distracting and cause conflict between the children.

13. Discipline

Discipline will take the form of staff attempting to help children solve their problems through the use of language and re-directing children to other suitable activities when necessary or removing them from a harmful situation when necessary. Time-outs may be administered depending on the situation. Children are encouraged to participate in various activities in the school in a respectful manner. Appropriate behavior will be demonstrated to the children with good role modeling from the teachers and positive reinforcement. The child is offered choices whenever possible. There will not be any yelling, spanking, hitting, or slapping, nor will there be negative criticism directed at the child. For more on discipline policy see Appendix B – Discipline Policy.

14. Student Conduct

A grace period of 4 weeks is given to children to allow them time to settle into the Montessori routine. Occasionally, a child continues to have difficulty acting in an appropriate manner beyond this grace period. This may be demonstrated through repeated misbehaviour or inappropriate interactions with teachers and students. In this event, a meeting between the parent and teacher will take place to discuss how best to serve the needs of the child and the school. Based on the outcome of this meeting, the teacher and parents may create a special program to help the child adjust. If this does not result in significant improvement, the parents may be asked to withdraw the child from the program.

15. Communication to the Home, Parent Meetings and Reports

Open communication with your child's teacher is highly recommended. Teachers are available to answer your questions before and after classes or at scheduled times. Primary classes have two reporting periods where the teacher will send home written progress reports. A newsletter is also sent home indicating special events, Board business and other information for parents.

16. Newsletters

The NWT Montessori Society sends home a newsletter periodically to inform parents of the current topics of study, pertinent notices, etc. This enables parents to follow up on school studies at home through books, trips, and general discussion.

17. Privacy

Information concerning a child or the child's family will be kept confidential. The following exceptions apply:

- ❖ The child's parent(s) or guardian shall have access to such information pertaining to their child;
- ❖ The Early Childhood Consultant may, on request, inspect a child's file as per subsection (2) & (3) of the Child Day Care Manual; and
- ❖ As per "Release of Information" consent given in the Registration Package.

18. Conferences and Reports

Parent/Teacher conferences will be scheduled twice a year in January and June corresponding with the written progress reports. As the need arises additional conferences can be scheduled.

19. Observations

Parents and grandparents may make observation visits to their child's classroom. This is a time for the child to share their school experience. Observations may be scheduled for a regular school day by calling the teacher for an appointment.

20. Celebrations of Special Occasions

Special occasions -- such as seasonal and cultural traditions and events -- are celebrated in each classroom according to the discretion of the teachers.

21. Birthdays

A group Birthday celebrations is held the last Friday of each month for all students with birthdays during the month. Due to health and fairness considerations, do not send any food for this celebration as it will be provided in class.

B. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The following procedures apply to NWT Montessori Society Primary CASA Classes at the Yellowknife Montessori Downtown School and the NJ Macpherson location. The Public Montessori Program Classes at NJ Macpherson School (NJM) follow policies set out by NJM and YK#1.

1. Membership Fee

The Primary CASA program an annual family membership fee for the NWT Montessori Society of \$50.00 must accompany the enrolment registration package. Membership fees are payable annually. Membership fees are non-refundable and are not pro-rated when families join the society mid-term. Families who have more than one child registered in Montessori programs only pay one annual membership fee of \$50.00. Payment of the membership fee entitles you to be a voting member of the NWT Montessori Society, and support its non-profit service to the community. As a member of the Society there is also a requirement for fundraising that can be met through volunteer activities or financial contribution (see section C. Fundraising and Volunteer Information)

2. Enrolment Deposit

A non-refundable enrolment deposit of \$250.00 is required to guarantee your child's registration. This deposit will be credited towards your annual school fees.

3. Tuition Billing Procedures – Appendix C

Plan A: Single Payment

One cheque payable on or before for the first day of school representing 100% of the yearly tuition less the enrolment deposit.

Plan B: Two Payments

Two cheques post-dated for the first day of school and the first school day of January totaling 100% of the tuition less the enrolment deposit.

Plan C: Quarterly Payments

Four cheques post-dated for the first day of school, November 1st, the first school day of January and March 1st totaling 100% of the tuition less the enrolment deposit.

Plan D: Monthly Payments

September to June – Ten post-dated cheques made payable for the 1st school day of each month.

Please note: Post-dated cheques are required. Failure to submit post-dated cheques for all required payments within seven days of the child attending school shall result in the immediate suspension of registration.

4. Withdrawal & Reimbursement

Withdrawals are accepted with 30 days written notice at any time throughout the school year. Fees for the months following the 30 days written notice will be refunded. Monthly fees are refunded for full months only, so please ensure that your 30 days written notice is received no later than the 1st of the month in order for you to receive the full refund of the next month(s) fees.

Fees are calculated to include the instructional days of the entire school year and take into account school holidays and statutory holidays. For the convenience of the payee, monthly fees are equal with the exception of a student entering the program mid-term. No rebate or reduction of fees is allowed for temporary absences.

The annual fundraising obligation of \$500.00 (\$50.00/month of attendance) is due prior to withdrawal of the child. If fundraising revenues or the fundraising deposits cashed do not cover the fundraising obligation, the balance will be due and owing. Fundraising revenues in excess of the obligation are non refundable.

5. Non-Sufficient Fund Cheques (NSF)

If a cheque for monthly fees is returned NSF or if payment is more that 14 days late, the following charges will be applied:

- ❖ On the 1st occurrence, a service charge of \$50.00 will be levied along with the school fees which must be paid by money order or a certified cheque.
- ❖ On the second and any subsequent occurrence, a \$75.00 service fee will be charged along with school fees and must be paid by a money order or a certified cheque to be provided within 7 days.
- ❖ Nonpayment will result in suspension of registration.

Any payment discrepancies not resolved by the Executive Director will be referred to the Board of Directors for final resolution.

C. FUNDRAISING & VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Parent contribution to and involvement with the program is important to children's development and the general success of the program.

The NWT Montessori Society fosters partnerships with parents to promote mutual trust, respect and develop the ethical and moral conduct of our students. Parents benefit from a strong association with the school and with other parents who share similar values and aspirations for their children.

The primary CASA classes and public classes offer various opportunities for parents and their families to become involved and collectively enrich our classroom and school environment.

Important aspects of contribution and involvement include:

1. Fundraising participation;
2. Committee involvement;
3. Classroom assistance.

1. Fundraising Participation

Every family is required to provide two post-dated cheques (for December 1st and May 1st) in the amount of \$250.00 each. These cheques represent your family's contribution towards a minimum fundraising total for the year at a rate equivalent to \$50.00 /month attendance.

A number of fundraising activities will be planned for the year. For certain fundraising events -- such as bingos, grocery bagging, etc, -- volunteers will earn \$20 per hour worked toward their fundraising total. For other events -- such as catalogue sales, Purdy's chocolate sales, etc, -- volunteers will be credited a percentage of their sales toward their fundraising total. If your volunteer efforts reach the \$500 mark, your post-dated cheques will not be cashed. If your participation does not reach the \$500 mark then you will pay only the difference. **Post-dated cheques are required at time of registration.** Members whose volunteer efforts surpass the \$500 minimum family fundraising total may be eligible for bonus prizes or recognition by the Board.

2. Committee Involvement

Fundraising Committee

Assist the Fundraising Chairperson with the development & execution of fundraising opportunities.

Building and Maintenance Committee

Maintenance of building, equipment and grounds (e.g., repair and maintenance of building and equipment as needed, landscaping and lawn care, etc.) and provision of advice on capital needs.

Special Committees

As required special committees are formed and require member involvement.

3. Classroom Assistance

We encourage every parent to spend time in the classroom. This time can be spent reading to the children, presenting a special craft or musical instrument, organizing a celebration, baking or cooking with the children or sharing any other special talent you may be gifted with. These activities will be scheduled by the teacher. Please keep in mind that this time spent volunteering does not count towards your fundraising requirement.

D. MONTESSORI INFORMATION

1. Mission

Using the Montessori Philosophy and Method of Education, our goal is to instill in each child a sound academic foundation, self-worth and respect for others, a love of learning, a sense of order and discipline, an appreciation of nature, and a strong sense of responsibility to the community.

2. Vision

The NWT Montessori Society will strive to provide a continuum of programs, from toddler through upper elementary, that affirms the uniqueness and value of a Montessori education and cultivate a life-long love of learning.

3. Introduction to NWT Montessori Society

The Yellowknife Montessori School has long been known and valued for its outstanding reputation in delivering excellent, education in Yellowknife.

The school was founded in 1975 by a group of dedicated parents committed to the principles and philosophies of Dr. Maria Montessori. The original preschool grew and expanded, and in 1998 was granted private school status and permission to offer elementary education for grades K-4.

Further hard work by the Board of Directors and staff resulted in our elementary program becoming part of the public school system with Yellowknife Education District #1 - and in the fall of 2004, the Montessori elementary classes moved to NJ Macpherson School. The Society continues to operate two CASA Primary classes at the Yellowknife Montessori School, and in the fall of 2007, a large waiting list prompted the opening of a third Casa classroom, housed at NJ Macpherson, bringing the current number of classes at the two locations to six, with approximately 100 students in attendance.

The CASA Primary classes at the Yellowknife Montessori School and NJ Macpherson locations are the responsibility of the NWT Montessori Society. The YK1 Public Montessori program is the responsibility of Yellowknife Education District #1. Collaboration between the Society and the District in support of both the programs are set out through a partnership agreement.

The NWT Montessori Society programs are inclusive and non-denominational, enriched by the ethnic diversity of our students. For over 30 years the programs have had proven success in providing a nurturing and stimulating environment where children can grow and develop intellectually, emotionally, and socially--developing a life-long love of learning. With a strong commitment to education and to the community of Yellowknife, and with a clear vision for the future, the NWT Montessori Society plans to serve the community of Yellowknife for many years to come by providing a carefully planned, stimulating school environment which will help children develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

4. General Principles of a Montessori Program

Independent activity makes up the majority of the students work. Teacher-directed activity and group work, large and small, make up the remainder.

Subjects are taught in an integrated fashion. Instruction is not divided into specific time frames associated with a particular subject area or activity.

Teachers generally work with the same group of students for more than one year.

There is a balance of freedom and responsibility. Basic classroom rules dictate that the student is free to choose activities but is responsible to structure choice and time to cover the curriculum.

Classroom schedules allow for large blocks of time to problem solve, observe, understand, interact, make connections, and create new ideas.

Where possible, classes have students in a three year age range. Younger students learn from older students and older students benefit from being leaders and mentors. This is a basic premise of Montessori education.

A diverse set of Montessori learning materials, hands-on activities and experiences are used to guide discovery and foster physical, intellectual, creative and social independence.

The classroom atmosphere encourages social interaction to enhance cooperative learning, peer teaching, and emotional development.

The teacher must be educated in the Montessori philosophy and methodology appropriate to the age level of the students.

Children are seen as internally motivated and therefore rewards such as stickers, candies, etc., are not used in the Montessori classroom.

Montessori educators seek to have a classroom where children are not afraid to make errors and where making errors and learning from them is a valuable part of developing life-long learning.

5. Goals of the Program

The main objective of the Yellowknife Montessori School is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help the children develop within themselves the foundation habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

Children in the Montessori program will:

- Develop a positive attitude towards school and learning;
- Gain a sense of self worth;
- Recognize the value of concentration;
- Mature into self-disciplined individuals;
- Develop an abiding curiosity;
- Become lifelong learners;
- Learn to take initiative;
- Sharpen senses in order to discriminate;
- Gain a sense or responsibility to the community;
- Learn to appreciate nature;
- Become stewards of the Earth.

6. The Primary Montessori Curriculum

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another. Each child must self-develop or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the years they spend in the classroom because that person is motivated from within by natural curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of study, but rather to cultivate the child's 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 or her own choice rather than by being forced; and second, by helping the child perfect his or her innate learning skills, so that the child's abilities will be maximized for 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.

Practical life exercises instill care for self, for others, and the environment. Activities include any of the tasks children see as part of the daily routine in their home, such as washing and folding laundry, doing the dishes and baking. Also included are exercises of grace and courtesy. Through these and other activities, children develop muscular coordination, enabling movement and the exploration of their surroundings. They learn to work at a task from beginning to end, developing their powers of control and concentration.

Sensorial exercises serve as tools for development. Children build cognitive skills and learn to order and classify impressions by touching, seeing, smelling, tasting, listening, and exploring the physical properties of their environment.

Language Development is vital to human existence. The Montessori environment provides rich spoken language through conversations, stories, and poetry. Sandpaper letters help children link sound and symbols effortlessly, allowing the children to become fully literate. To further the development of reading, children are given opportunities to explore the function of words and the structure of sentences.

Mathematics materials help children learn and understand mathematical concepts by manipulating concrete materials. This work gives the children a solid understanding of basic mathematical principles, prepares them for abstract reasoning, and helps to develop problem-solving capabilities.

Cultural Subjects such as Geography, Biology, Botany, Zoology, Art, and Music are presented as extensions of the Sensorial and Language activities. Children learn about other cultures. This allows their innate respect and admiration to flourish and engenders a sense of solidarity with the global human family. Experiences with nature in conjunction with materials in the environment inspire a reverence for all life.

APPENDIX A

Discipline Policy

Purpose

The NWT Montessori Society believes in creating a safe environment where children will build their self-esteem and learn self-discipline. Self-discipline is based upon self-esteem, respect for others, and requires taking responsibility for one's behaviour.

We provide clear expectations for behaviour. Staff models this behaviour and expect the children to do likewise. When a child misbehaves, there are consequences. The consequences must always reinforce the child's dignity, so that the child realizes that it is his or her behaviour which is unacceptable, not himself or herself.

The following behaviours are unacceptable:

- ❖ Showing disrespect to other students, staff or school property, which can include but is not limited to:
 - Physical violence, hurting others, damaging property;
 - Verbal violence, hurtful remarks, put-downs, direct or indirect threats;
 - Other behaviours intended to intimidate or harass, such as using rude language or gestures;
- ❖ Stealing;
- ❖ Lying.

Procedures

The following steps will be taken when a child does not meet safe or respectful behavioural expectations:

- ❖ A teacher explains to the child why the behaviour is inappropriate.
- ❖ The child is heard.
- ❖ The teacher and child discuss options for how the child could have handled the situation differently.
- ❖ The child is asked to take responsibility for his or her actions by making amends in an appropriate manner.
- ❖ Depending upon the situation, the child will be redirected to another activity, allowed to rejoin the class, or will be asked to sit on a chair away from the other children for a short duration to think about his or her behaviour.

For serious misbehavior such as violence or bullying, action will be taken as follows:

- ❖ The teacher will remove the child from the situation;
- ❖ The teacher will use the aforementioned steps to rectify the situation;
- ❖ An incident report will be filled out and placed in the child's file;
- ❖ The teacher will inform the parents of their child's behavior.

Should the behavior continue and a **third** incident occurs within a short time span (*definition of short time span is at the teachers' discretion*), the following actions will be taken:

- ❖ The teacher may request that the parent(s) remove the child temporarily from the school.
- ❖ A parent/teacher meeting will be scheduled to devise a plan of expectations and consequences.
- ❖ The above meeting will be required before a removed child is accepted back in the school.
- ❖ Records of confirmed incidents will be kept on the student's file.
- ❖ Suspensions or expulsions will be considered in extreme circumstances.

If a report of bullying is made by a parent (following the reporting procedure set out below in "Procedures for Resolving Parental Concerns"), or a student complains to a teacher, the preceding procedures will be followed. Further, the teacher may do the following:

- ❖ Discuss the situation with the student(s) involved.
- ❖ Hold an in-class discussion aimed at addressing future misbehaviour.
- ❖ Keep a continual written record of every incident.
- ❖ Host in-class presentations by a professional counselor.

Procedures for Resolving Parental Concerns

If you are concerned about something happening in your child's classroom or the school environment, please follow these guidelines:

1. Discuss your concern with your child's teacher. Choose an appropriate time away from other children, or request an appointment.
2. If you are not satisfied with the discussion and any action taken, contact the Executive Director.
3. If the situation has not been resolved to your satisfaction, inform the Board of Directors in writing.
4. Board representatives will take necessary actions to resolve the matter, such as calling a meeting to discuss the situation or raising the issue for consideration at the next scheduled Board meeting.
5. You will be contacted by the Board for your involvement in resolving the concern.

Staff Training and Parent Information Nights

The NWT Montessori Society will support discipline-related staff training, and may bring in a professional counselor to expand the classroom tools available to teachers and staff. It may also host evening sessions for parents. These activities have the following aims:

- ❖ To provide teachers and staff with tools to address discipline;
- ❖ To help students to understand the impacts of their behaviour;
- ❖ To empower students to "bully-proof" themselves;
- ❖ To provide parents with tools to assist at home.