

RICHLAND ACADEMY

PARENT

HANDBOOK

HISTORY OF RICHLAND ACADEMY

C. Joyce Page established Richland Academy in 1982 as a private preschool dedicated to the teaching philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. Licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Richland Academy was, and still is, one of the few preschools in Johnstown licensed as a Private Academic Preschool and Kindergarten. In 1983, Richland Academy became a non-profit organization, electing its first volunteer Board of Directors. The Kindergarten program began being offered this same year, transforming our preschool into an authentic, multiage Montessori Preprimary Program. 1984 marked the first year that Childcare services were offered to Richland Academy working families. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare licenses our Childcare Programs. Having out-grown our former facility on Budfield Street, Richland Academy opened its doors to students in the historic, former Elton Elementary School building in 1991. The summer of 1996 marked the first year that enrollment opportunities in Richland Academy's Summer Program were extended to the greater community. In 1997, Richland Academy expanded its program offerings to include the Toddler Program. Our future goals include working towards our affiliation with the American Montessori Society and embarking on the self-study phase toward accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION STATEMENT

The programs at Richland Academy are committed to providing an individualized education, which combines the Montessori method of early childhood education with current research about developmentally appropriate practices. Our programs aim to educate the whole child within warm environments which foster a life-long love of learning, nurture positive self-concepts, and lay the foundations for future success in our multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, linguistically-diverse world. Although the environments, structure, materials, staff, and curriculum differ according to the category of service provided (academic programs or childcare) and according to the ages of children served (toddler, preschool, kindergarten); all of the Programs at Richland Academy share common views of the child, the classroom environment, and the teacher.

Richland Academy views the child as:

- The constructor of his own knowledge and an active participant in his individual learning experience (in collaboration with the teacher).
- Capable of making choices within a carefully designed environment.
- Possessing sensitive periods and following universal, predictable sequences of growth and change during the first 8 years of life.
- Worthy of an attitude of mutual respect, equal in humanity, if not in development, experience, or education.

Richland Academy views the classroom environment as:

- A carefully "prepared environment" which strives to be harmonious, supportive, child-centered, consistent, and non-competitive.
- An aesthetically pleasing, safe, and clean space where child-initiated, child-directed, teacher supported activity thrives.
- Balancing the developmental needs of each individual child with those of the classroom community as a whole.
- Engaging each child in age-appropriate experiences that enhance intellectual, communicative, perceptual, physical, social, and emotional growth and development.
- Designed to promote authentic learning (understood as the process of making meaning out of experiences and interactions).
- Utilizing hands-on, concrete materials and experiences as the building blocks for the later development of abstract thought.
- Balancing the development of critical thinking strategies and positive dispositions toward learning with the acquisition of specific skills and information.

Richland Academy views the teacher as:

- The vital link between the child and the prepared environment.
- The designer of a prepared environment that is responsive to, and shaped by, the emotional, physical, social, and intellectual needs of each child within the class.
- Committed to assisting children in realizing their unique, immense, inner potential.
- Capable of true respect for the child as the constructor of her own intelligence and character.
- An observer, guide, role model, protector, and resource in the classroom learning community.
- Dedicated to providing authentic, meaning-making experiences for children that draw upon their personal interests and are relevant to their life.
- Capable of offering choices to children and willing to allow them to take the natural or logical consequences for both appropriate and inappropriate choices.
- Recognizing the parents as the child's first teachers. Fostering communication and collaboration with parents related to their child's growth and development.

ABSENTEEISM

Toddler/Preprimary/Childcare: Please inform the staff of anticipated absences due to illness by leaving a message on the answering machine or by calling in the morning before 8:00 a.m. Absences due to scheduled appointments or vacations should be communicated via a written note. Parents of Kindergarten students who ride the bus must notify their bus company of absences.

APPLICATIONS AND ENROLLMENT POLICY

Toddler: The Toddler Program is open to children 18 to 39 months of age. Enrollment opportunities are based on current space availability and waiting-list considerations. Priority is given to returning students, siblings of currently enrolled students, and siblings of alumni (in that order). An application fee of \$30.00 is due at the time of acceptance, and annually thereafter.

Preprimary: The Montessori preprimary program is opened to children 2.7 (at date of enrollment) to 6 years of age. Children must be able to use the bathroom independently. Kindergarten students must meet the Kindergarten age restrictions of their local public school district or be 5 years old by September 1st. Applications are accepted throughout the year for September and January enrollment. Enrollment begins in September and follows the academic school calendar that is distributed each year prior to the start of school. Late enrollments may be accepted on a space available basis and with permission of the Montessori Directress and Educational Director. Applications for re-enrollment must be submitted on an annual basis in the time frame set forth each year by the Educational Director and Board of Directors. There is an annual \$30.00 application/registration fee. Decisions concerning acceptance and enrollment are made in the spring of each year. Priority is given to returning students, siblings of currently enrolled students, siblings of alumni, and to younger students (in that order). The date of the application is also considered in the selection process.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Arrival: Please accompany your child to the rear school building door no more than 10 minutes prior to your child's scheduled class time. Since the morning programs begin at 8:45 a.m. teachers will welcome your child at the door from 8:35 a.m. - 8:55 a.m. For our afternoon program, teachers will welcome your child at the door from 12:20 p.m. - 12:40 p.m. To ease separation anxiety, we ask that you do not enter the building with your child. Once your child enters the building, we will allow them to get ready for their day as independently as possible. Children will be encouraged to hang-up their outerwear, remove their own shoes, and put on their slippers independently. Tote bags and coats should be placed on the hooks. Lunchboxes are to be placed on the shelf above. Shoes, boots, and slippers are to be placed underneath the shelf.

Late Arrivals: If your child is late arriving for school, and a staff member is no longer monitoring the door, please help him/her respect the classroom activities already in progress by getting ready as quietly as possible. Please stay with your child while s/he gets ready, and then escort them to the classroom door. Please send your child into the classroom to greet a teacher so that we are aware of your child's arrival.

Dismissal: Please park and come into the building to pick-up your child at dismissal time. The morning academic programs dismiss at 11:45 a.m. Extended Day ends at 2:30 p.m. Our afternoon program is over at 3:30 p.m. If we are on the playground, please meet your child at the play area. Be sure that a teacher is aware of you and your child's departure! Since our parking lot is extremely busy, for your child's safety, do not under any circumstances allow your child to venture into the driveway without you by their side.

Late Pick-up: If you are going to be unavoidably delayed, please call the school and inform a staff member of your delay. Parents are considered late when they arrive for pick-up more than 5 minutes past the scheduled pick-up time. The fee for your child's supervision when you are late will be assessed at the rate of \$1.00 for every 15 minutes.

After-Hours Late Fee: The Richland Academy Childcare program closes at 5:30 p.m. Children who remain in the school's care, after 5:30 p.m., will be charged \$10.00 every 15 minutes.

Authorized Pick-up People: For the safety of your child, it is Richland Academy's policy to release children only to those individuals previously authorized by parents or guardians on our Release Form. Written permission is required for your child to be released to someone other than the usual, authorized pick-up person. This written permission should include the full name of the person picking up your child, relation to child, make and color of car, and license plate number. You should also include a phone number of where you can be reached at pick-up time to enable staff to contact you should it be necessary. The individual picking up your child may be required to provide our staff with a Photo I.D. Please be sure that this individual is aware of this policy.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance contributes to your child's progress and comfortable adjustment to the classroom and childcare environments. Dr. Montessori realized that crucial to young children's sense of self is their need to feel that they "belong" in their culture, family, and peer group. Regular attendance enhances a child's sense of belonging. The child who attends infrequently or irregularly literally "starts over" each time they return to school. Their return to school can be likened to how it feels to join a party already in progress. Things are in full swing and there is awkwardness about joining in when everyone else already appears to be settled in.

Although occasional requests from your child to stay home from school are normal and can be entertained at your discretion, please let a staff person know if your child repeatedly seems unwilling to attend. Fostering a positive attitude toward school and learning is an essential goal of our programs. Therefore, we would like to make every effort to discover the source of any child's uneasiness about coming to school. Parents and teachers can then

work together to establish positive feelings about school. Likewise, should your child come home with a negative comment about school, a teacher, or a classmate, please let us know right away so we can address the situation. As it is our policy never to discuss any child in front of him, please communicate your concerns by note or with the privacy of a phone call.

BIRTHDAYS

We welcome the opportunity to celebrate your child's birthday or half birthday at school. The birthday celebration in a Montessori classroom is very special. The birthday child symbolizes their growth by walking our model of the earth around a candle (symbolizing the sun) the number of times the earth has revolved around the sun in their lifetime. Families are welcome to join in the celebration. Don't forget your camera or camcorder!

You will be given a birthday bag several days prior to your child's celebration. Included will be a story about your child that we ask your help to complete, as well as several numbered picture frames for your child's photos. This photographic portfolio of your child's growth over the years will be shared with their friends during the celebration. All photos will be returned. Families are also encouraged to donate a book to our library in honor of their child's birthday. Your child's name and the occasion of the donation will be inscribed on the inside front cover.

If your child wishes to share a special birthday snack or take home treat with their friends, please be sure to provide enough for each child. All take home treats need to be marked with the name of each class member. Please be sure that staff is aware of your school birthday party plans a few days in advance so we can plan accordingly. Also, cake and cupcakes are not permitted, as they are extremely messy and usually wasted! Large birthday cookies (pizza-sized) can be decorated like a cake, and offer an acceptable alternative.

Birthday Party Invitations: Invitations to birthday parties may be passed out at school only if all children in the class are being invited. Please utilize our school directory and mail invitations if your child will only be inviting a few friends.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Richland Academy is a non-profit organization and must therefore be operated by a Board of Directors. Our Board is made up of seven volunteer members. The names and phone numbers of our current Board members are published in our School Directory. They can also be obtained in the office upon request. Vacancies on the Board are announced in our newsletter and at R.A.P.O. meetings. To fill a vacancy, a letter of intent from interested persons needs to be forwarded to the Board. The Board selects, by vote, candidates to fill vacancies. Each term of office is 5 years.

BOARD MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the Board are open to the public. This preserves the rights of parents of Richland Academy students to petition the Board. Dates and times of scheduled Board Meetings are published in our monthly newsletter and are announced at R.A.P.O. meetings.

Petitioner Procedures: Any person or group wishing to address the Board is required to file with the Board President a written request to be placed on the agenda. This request must be submitted at least eight (8) days prior to the next scheduled meeting. This policy is established to regulate scheduled appearances before the Board. Requests to be placed on the agenda will be acknowledged and either accepted or declined prior to the next scheduled meeting. A request to have a matter placed on the agenda shall contain the following information:

- name of the person(s) making the request
- organization or group, if any, represented
- content of the information to be presented
- specific question to be asked or specific action desired of the Board

If written material is to be disseminated at the meeting, a copy of such material must accompany the request.

If any information, statements, or charges is to be presented that may in anyway be considered derogatory, confidential or defamatory, or of another serious nature, such must be presented in writing, specifically stating the charges.

Visitors: Since Board Meetings are open to the public, all visitors are welcome and arrangements will be made for their comfort. A copy of the agenda will be provided for each visitor until the supply of extra copies is depleted. Five (5) copies of the Disbursement Sheet and one (1) copy of the Minutes of the last meeting shall be provided.

The Board President or presiding officer will ascertain, prior to the opening of the meeting, whether any visitor who has not previously made a request to speak on an item on the agenda wishes to bring anything to the attention of the Board. Under most circumstances, the Board can permit a brief statement at an appropriate time by a visitor requesting to be heard. However, the presiding officer may limit the time permitted an individual or group, or insist that they speak only when formally recognized and only when the item is being considered as it appears on the planned agenda. This may seem overly restrictive, but Board meetings are normally long, and it is essential that all items on the agenda be given careful consideration.

After visitors have been heard and the Board has begun its deliberations on an item of business, no comments or questions shall be permitted from the floor. Visitors are often strongly tempted to make suggestions, voice disagreement, or ask for clarification; but the Board cannot carry on an orderly discussion if the deliberative body is suddenly, enlarged to include those who have come to observe.

The Chairperson has the prerogative to waive the provisions of this section of the policy at his/her discretion.

BOOK CLUBS

Richland Academy participates in several book and software club programs. Selection catalogues with order forms will be sent home monthly during the school year. Your participation is optional. Your purchases from these clubs enable the school to acquire materials and books for the classroom and our lending library.

BREAKFAST

We realize parents are not always able to provide their child with a nutritious breakfast before they come to school. Richland Academy offers time set aside for the morning meal as part of our Before & After School Childcare Program. Although parents are responsible for providing the breakfast menu for their child, we will have fresh milk available for cereal or refreshments. Items that could be purchased in bulk and stored at the school include cold or instant cereals, waffles, muffins, fruit, or breakfast bars. Breakfast time is 7:00a.m. - 8:15 a.m.

BUSSING

Kindergarten children are eligible for bussing by their local public school district provided that Richland Academy is within 10 miles from your child's school district boundary. Richland Academy will send a request for bussing form and a copy of our school calendar to the school district upon request from the parent. Parents are responsible for contacting their particular school district to request service and to arrange bussing details (times and locations of drop-off and pick-up). In the event that your child will not be riding the bus on a particular day, either to or from school, please be sure to contact both Richland Academy and the particular bus company involved.

CALENDAR

Prior to the start of each academic school year, a school calendar will be issued to each family. This calendar outlines the days classes will be held as well as highlighting special school events, closures due to holidays or teacher in-service days, Parent-Teacher conference days and the scheduled dates of closure for the childcare program. Richland Academy reserves the right to close the childcare program due to inclement weather or lack of pre-registered enrollment on a particular day.

CARPOOLS

Although the school is not responsible for organizing or maintaining carpools, we encourage families to form carpools and will assist in any way we can. Parent Orientation Night, R.A.P.O. Meetings, and the School Directory may assist you in locating families living nearby.

Please inform the staff in writing if you are joining a carpool and if someone other than you will be picking up your child. A schedule of designated drivers along with your written permission for your child to be regularly released to these drivers must be submitted before your child will be released.

The staff suggests that carpool drivers discuss with the children some basic passenger and street safety rules. Pennsylvania state law requires all children less than eight (8) years of age to be placed in a properly fitting child safety restraint/car seat. Children over 8 years of age may be buckled with car restraints that fit properly (shoulder harness should NEVER cross the child at the neck and the lap belt should fit snugly across the hips. Straps should lie flat against the child's body.) Remember that children are safest in the back seat.

CHILDCARE SERVICES IN OUR MONTESSORI HOME ENVIRONMENT

Richland Academy offers childcare services year-round from 7:00a.m. - 5:30p.m. for students enrolled in our academic programs. The programs offered through our childcare include Full Day, Half-Day, and Before & After School Childcare. All childcare programs are based on the principles of developmentally appropriate practice and the theories of Dr. Montessori.

All students enrolled in our academic programs must have an application and agreement form completed for our childcare services upon enrollment. We mandate this as a precautionary measure, to insure that should an emergency arrive and your child require care, we will be able to provide that care without jeopardizing our licensure.

Full Day Care: More than 5 hours of care on non-program days.

Half-Day Care: Up to 5 hours after academic programs.

Before & After School Care: Children enrolled in our academic programs may utilize our Before and After School Childcare Program. This program is designed to meet the developmental needs of the children it serves while also complimenting the Montessori classroom. The Before & After School Care Program places special emphasis on cooperative play, socialization, dramatization, creative art, and outdoor movement.

Hours of Operation - 7:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

11:45 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Please note that childcare services are not available during the hours of 8:45 a.m.–11:45 a.m.

Please note that children attending the childcare program from 1:00p.m. - 3:00p.m. will be expected to nap/rest. Please send a crib sized sheet, light blanket, and a small pillow for your child. If necessary, children may bring a special "cuddly" for rest time. These items will stay at the school and space is limited! Please be sure all items brought from home do not pose a choking or safety hazard and can be laundered frequently.

Children using our childcare services will be billed on a monthly basis.

CLOSURES DUE TO INCLIMATE WEATHER OR OTHER EMERGENCIES

Although Richland Academy makes every effort to remain open for working families, our school maintains the policy not to hold classes on bad weather days. Cancellations may be made the night before classes or during the early morning hours. The announcement of our school's closure may be heard on the following stations:

- WJAC-TV (11p.m., 5-7 a.m.)
- WWCP-TV (10 p.m., 11 p.m.)
- WYOT "Hot 99" 92.1FM
- WKYE "96 Key" 96.5 FM
- WFGI "Froggy 95" 95.5
- WCCL Cool 101.7

Occasionally, last minute cancellations due to unforeseen water or electrical problems may occur. In these circumstances, we will alert parents by telephone if we are forced to cancel classes.

At times, academic classes will be canceled on days when our childcare program remains open. If there is space available in our childcare program we will accept children on a drop-in basis as space and staffing permits. To check for space availability, call the school at 262-9201 or contact the Childcare Director. If you were scheduled for childcare on the day of a childcare cancellation and cannot make other arrangements for the care of your child, please do not hesitate to call a staff person. Although we cannot make any promises, we may be able to assist you in finding a suitable arrangement.

CLOTHING/CLOTHING BOXES

Indoor Attire: Please send your child to school in clothing that will allow him/her to fully participate in the kind of physical, and sometimes messy, activities that are so appealing to them. Comfortable play clothes with easy to handle fasteners are most appropriate. Clothing that children will be removing at school (sweaters, jackets, mittens, etc.) must be labeled with your child's name.

Outdoor Attire: Outdoor activity is an integral part of all of our programs. Unless it is raining or frigid, you can expect that the children will be invited to explore our outdoor environment each day. With this in mind, please be sure to send your child to school with the appropriate outdoor attire each and every day.

Extra Changes of Clothing: On your child's first day of school, please supply us with a complete change of clothing. This would include underwear (if applicable), socks, pants, and a shirt. These will allow your child to change should water be spilled or some other mishap occur inside or out-of-doors. All items must be labeled with your child's name and placed in a clearly labeled bag. Spare clothes are stored in our clothing boxes, located in the classroom bathroom. When soiled or wet clothing is sent home, we request that you send replacements the next day. That way they will be available to your child in the event of another accident. Children, who regularly attend Before & After School Childcare, should supply us with two (2) sets of extra clothing. Please remember to replace clothing seasonally.

COMMUNICATION/MESSAGES

Indoor Mailbox: Our indoor mailbox, located in the hallway should be used to deliver the following items:

- tuition payments
- childcare payments
- monthly book orders
- written communication from home (not of an urgent nature - urgent messages should be handed to a staff person.)

When placing items in the mailbox, please put your correspondence in an envelope. Include the following information on the envelope:

To: intended person

From: your name

Contents: i.e., tuition, personal, etc.

When possible, give your child the opportunity to deliver this "mail" to our mailbox!

Phone Messages: While classes are in session, a staff person may not be available to answer telephone calls. However, our school answering machine enables the staff to monitor incoming calls. Please leave a message on the machine and one of our staff will respond as soon as possible.

Pony Express Folders/Documents from School: The school will provide each child with a Pony Express Folder at the beginning of the school year. The purpose of this folder is to send home important documents from school. The folder both protects these documents and alerts families to the presence of important information from school. Please return the folder to school each time it is sent home. Since our staff does not check Pony Express Folders when they are returned to school, please do not use these folders for home to school communications. See Indoor Mailbox (above) for information concerning sending documents to school.

Newsletter: To enhance communication with our parents, a school newsletter will be distributed on a monthly basis. This newsletter contains relevant information pertaining to school functions as well as parent education and Montessori information.

Parent Bulletin Board: The bulletin board located at the back entrance hallway is used to post important information for parents from the school and from the community at large. Parents may also use the board as a means of communicating or sharing information with other parents. Please share information or notices to be posted with the Educational Director before posting.

CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled during the fall and spring of each academic school year for parents of all children enrolled in our academic programs. Conferences are viewed as an opportunity for parents and teachers to exchange information about your child as well as an opportunity for teachers to discuss your child's adjustment and developmental progress.

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Toddler: The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare licenses our Toddler Program. The toddler curriculum provides developmentally appropriate experiences for children 18-39 months. The curriculum addresses the same areas of general development as the preprimary curriculum (below). It is also guided by the sensitive periods identified by Dr. Montessori during this stage of development:

- growth of receptive and expressive language skills
- independence
- order
- repetition
- development of sensory awareness and perception
- coordination of gross & fine motor skills
- experimentation of physical properties of objects
- function of everyday objects
- formation of fundamental concepts

The objectives of the toddler curriculum are to support your child's motor, language, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Parents may choose from one of our two morning programs:

5 Day: Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday-Friday

3 Day: Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday

All classes meet from 8:45-11:45 a.m. Please see our brochure for current tuition prices.

Preprimary: The Pennsylvania Department of Education licenses our Preschool and Kindergarten Programs. The preprimary Montessori program (which includes the Montessori Kindergarten program) provides individualized, developmentally appropriate and age appropriate learning experiences in the areas of Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, Science, Geography, and Cultural Studies. The objectives of the preprimary curriculum are to provide meaningful opportunities to acquire specific academic skills while also enhancing general development in the areas of:

- cognitive development (concentration, problem solving skills, memory, etc.)
- language development (receptive and expressive)
- physical development (gross and fine motor)
- social development (socialization)
- emotional development (self-esteem, self-confidence, etc.)

Parents may choose either of our two preprimary programs:

5 Day Morning: Monday through Friday (8:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m.)

3 Day Afternoon: Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday (12:30 p.m. -3:30 p.m.)

Please see our brochure for current tuition prices.

Kindergarten: Our Montessori preprimary curriculum is a comprehensive three-year program using the teaching methods of Dr. Maria Montessori. Since there is a definite continuity to our programs, for optimal benefit we recommend that your child attend through their Kindergarten year. Your child is eligible for our Kindergarten program if s/he is 5 years of age by September 1st.

The Richland Academy Kindergarten program represents the child's final year in the Montessori preprimary environment. Typically, Kindergarten-age children in a Montessori classroom begin to progress to the more abstract academic materials, though their work in the Practical Life and Sensorial Areas remains critical to their overall development. Parents and teachers alike can observe a growth in the kindergartner's confidence, independence, concentration, and coordination. Perhaps above all, your child's need to be part of the social community will stand out during this year. The years before age six are critical years for social development; so expect the staff to be nurturing the strong social tendencies of your kindergartener.

Kindergarten-age children continue to receive individual and small group lessons, and to work freely in the classroom with the auto-educational Montessori materials. The scope and sequence of lessons and materials introduced to the kindergarteners will vary year-to-year depending on the developmental needs, interests, and abilities of each child. In addition to using established Montessori materials, students will be given more teacher-directed lessons that will help prepare them for the traditional teaching styles and classroom dynamics that they will encounter when entering public or parochial first grade programs.

A child attending the 5 Day program will fulfill the requirements for Kindergarten in the state of Pennsylvania.

Extended Day: This is not childcare. The Extended Day program provides children 4 years of age and older, with 1 year of classroom experience, an "extended" opportunity to work in the Montessori preprimary classroom. Special themes and projects relating to Geography, Zoology, Botany, Science, and other aspects of Dr. Montessori's notion of a "Cosmic Education" provide the framework for this program. This program is only open to children enrolled in our morning program and is strongly recommended for Kindergarten students.

The Extended Day program is held Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday from 11:45 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. and includes a lunch period (parents provide the lunch). Please see our brochure for the current tuition prices.

Special Classes: Special classes such as art, dance, music, Spanish, etc. may be offered during the school year for children enrolled in our preprimary program. Information regarding these special classes, as well as fees, will be distributed during the school year.

Summer Programs: Information and fees regarding our 8 week thematic Summer Program are distributed in the spring of each year. Childcare services for enrolled children 18 months - 6 years are available all summer Monday through Friday.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

What does that mean? Developmentally appropriate practices in a school setting are when educators use research-based knowledge about child development (cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and language), in conjunction with the understanding of each individual child's unique strengths, interests, and learning styles, to plan all aspects of the school's programs. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) regarding developmentally appropriate practices.

DIAPERS

Parents of children enrolled in our Toddler Program whose toddler is not yet potty trained are asked to provide enough diapers and wipes for their child to be changed, as needed each day. Ointments, creams, and powders to prevent diaper rashes are considered "non-prescription medications" and will not be administered without the parent's written consent.

DIRECTORY

Richland Academy issues an annual student directory that lists the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all families with children enrolled in the school. Each family will be given a copy of this directory in the fall. If you do not wish for your name, address, or phone number to appear in this Directory, please notify the Educational Director as soon as possible. Changes and additions to the directory are published in our monthly newsletter as they occur.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

When we speak of discipline in a Montessori classroom, we are talking about giving children the opportunity to learn how to achieve self-discipline. Discipline for the "long haul" is achieved by teaching, and more importantly, modeling appropriate behavior so that children can begin to guide their own actions.

The staff at Richland Academy primarily utilizes preventive and supportive discipline techniques. We set a calm and peaceful tone in the classroom that fosters a general respect for each child and their work. We model using our words instead of our bodies to solve problems. When children do behave inappropriately, they are privately approached and reminded of the appropriate behavior expected. For the most part, children just need to be reminded. Sometimes they will need guidance, assistance with problem solving strategies, or redirection to find an activity that will absorb their attention fully. Occasionally students may need to sit quietly next to a teacher until they are able to regulate their behavior independently. The closeness of a trusted adult is especially soothing to a child who has lost control of their emotions/behavior. Physically isolating a child from the environment in "time-out" is very rarely used. Corporal punishment and derogatory remarks

are never used. Consultation with parents will be requested for any child experiencing repeated behavior control issues.

Parents with questions or concerns about discipline should schedule a time to speak with their child's teachers.

DONATIONS

Your support in the form of donations is vital to Richland Academy. Such donations enable us to enhance the quality of our programs at the lowest possible cost to you. We ask that you consider your donation efforts as part of your yearly commitment to your child's school environment.

Paper Products: All families are asked to contribute one (1) paper product to the school each month. The newsletter will list the items of greatest need. Items like: facial tissues, toilet paper, paper towels, paper cups, 6" paper plates, paper bowls, napkins, etc. will be requested.

Miscellaneous Items: Fabric, washable markers, construction paper, magazines, game pieces, odds & ends, watercolors, etc. are all examples of greatly appreciated donation items. You name it and we could probably find a way to recycle it!

Wish List: The staff comprises a list of items each year that they would like to have available to the children. In lieu of gift-giving, please refer to this list (available in the office).

Receipts: Richland Academy is a nonprofit organization. Receipts for income tax purposes documenting donations of money, materials, or professional services that are volunteered will be furnished upon request.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Richland Academy's Emergency Operations Plan describes the procedures that will be used to provide for the care and well being of the children under our care, and for our staff. This plan is meant to address an extraordinary circumstance that threatens lives and property. The procedures outlined in this plan constitute those temporary measures that will be taken to provide the best available protection for persons under our care. Important details from the plan are sent home with parents in the orientation packets, and in periodic handouts. The entire plan is available for parents to review in the facility.

EXPULSION

For any child experiencing repeated behavioral issues after the original 30-day probationary period, a conference will be requested with the child's parents to set forth a disciplinary plan. If after 30 days from the conference date, there is no improvement of the child's behavior, we reserve the right to dismiss the child from our program.

FIELD TRIPS

To extend our learning environment beyond the classroom, Richland Academy typically schedules two school field trips during the school year for our preprimary students. Depending on the nature of the field trip, toddlers may also be included. Suggestions for field trips are always welcome. Information concerning field trips is printed in our newsletter or via special hand-outs. Parent volunteers provide transportation to and from field trips. Signed permission slips are always required for all children attending field trips. Car seats are mandatory for all children under eight (8) years of age.

FIRE SAFETY

For the safety of Richland Academy's staff and children in our care, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are located throughout our building. Both are inspected annually. All Richland Academy staff members participate in annual fire safety training conducted by fire protection professionals. School wide fire drills are conducted twice a year, in October and April. Fire drills for childcare students are conducted every 60 days.

FIRST AID

All Richland Academy staff members receive first aid and CPR training by a professional in the field of first aid. Each year, parents are required to give their permission for our staff to perform first aid and CPR on their child if necessary. A child receiving a minor injury, such as a bump, bruise, scrape, or cut will receive appropriate treatment from a staff member and parents will be notified of the incident at pick-up time. For an injury of a more serious nature, treatment will be given, parents will be notified of the injury by phone, and an Incident Report will be filled out. If emergency medical care is needed for your child, a staff member will contact the parents as soon as possible, in the best interest of the child. If the parent cannot be reached, a staff member shall record in writing the reason emergency care was required and the attempts made to inform the parent. A staff member will accompany the child to the source of emergency care, and will remain with the child until the parent assumes responsibility for the child's care.

FUNDRAISERS

As a nonprofit organization, Richland Academy relies on fundraisers to enhance the quality of our programs. This enables us to keep our tuition and childcare fees competitive. Funds raised throughout the year by our parent organization (R.A.P.O.) are used in the following manner (at the discretion of the Board of Directors):

- purchase new equipment, or replace worn materials
- defray operating expenses
- teacher benefits
- miscellaneous: field trips, expenditures for special events (open house, graduation, holiday parties)

Participation in our fundraisers is the responsibility of parents, Board members, and staff. All funds raised should be turned in to the school in the form of a check made out to Richland Academy.

GRIEVANCES

The Grievance Appeal Procedure at Richland Academy provides a means for resolving problems identified by parents and/or staff. The intent of this procedure is not to question individual decisions, but rather to either:

- clarify school policies or procedures
- identify the need for a new policy or procedure
- change an existing policy or procedure
- provide a forum for resolving an alleged violation of an existing policy or procedure

In all cases, the problem in question must first be discussed with the relevant school personnel. In the case of parent concerns, issues should first be discussed with your child's teacher(s), if it is a class-related issue, or with the Childcare Director, if it is childcare related, or with the Educational Director, if it is an administrative issue. Only if these discussions fail to resolve the issue should the appeal process be invoked. The Chain of Command (and path to be followed for grievances) at Richland Academy is as follows:

For Childcare:

Childcare Aide > Assistant Group Supervisor > Group Supervisor > Childcare Director > Educational Director > Board President > Executive Committee > Full Board.

For Toddler Classroom:

Classroom Assistant > Toddler Program Director > Montessori Directress > Educational Director > Board President > Executive Committee > Full Board.

For Preprimary Classroom:

Classroom Assistant > Montessori Directress > Educational Director > Board President > Executive Committee > Full Board.

For Administrative Issues: *(bookkeeping, fees, billing, registration, etc.)*

Treasurer or Childcare Director > Educational Director > Board President > Executive Committee > Full Board

Unresolved issues or concerns with classroom staff should be brought to the attention of the Educational Director. The Educational Director will be responsible for either resolving the issue or bringing the matter before the Board. Parents who wish to directly petition the Richland Academy Board should refer to the section on board meetings.

GROUND RULES

Our classroom and childcare ground rules are posted for parents to review. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the rights and responsibilities your child will share in our environments. As always, any questions regarding ground rules should be brought to our attention.

LIBRARY

Richland Academy maintains a small lending library for enrolled students. The children have regular opportunities to experience the process involved in borrowing books from the library as part of the curriculum. Children will be assisted in selecting and checking out books from our selection of quality children's literature. Please take care of books that come home and help your child remember to return them before the next library day. We ask that any lost or damaged book be replaced with a new book of the same subject matter.

The upkeep of our libraries has traditionally been a joint effort between Richland Academy staff and parents. If you would like to assist with our library program please let a staff member know.

LICENSES

Richland Academy is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to function as a Private Academic Preschool and Kindergarten. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare licenses our Toddler and Childcare Programs.

LOCKED DOORS

For the safety of Richland Academy's staff and the children in our care, our building doors remain locked from the outside, at all times. All staff members carry keys to lock and unlock the doors. To notify staff of your presence, please ring the doorbell, located outside the back door.

LUNCHESES

Children in our care during our lunchtime (noon) should bring a nutritious mid-day meal. This meal may be packed in a brown bag or a lunch box. Be sure to clearly mark the outside of the bag or lunch box. Since the refrigerator in our Montessori Home Environment is not large enough to accommodate children's lunch boxes, please make use of thermoses and ice packs. Our staff will be pleased to warm dishes in our microwave (provided items are sent to school in a microwave-safe dish!) Please also include utensils your child may need to eat

their lunches and two napkins. Toothbrushes & toothpaste may be sent to school in your child's lunch box for after lunch use.

Please be aware that all uneaten food will be sent home in your child's lunch box to enable parents to see what their child has eaten each day. Children are not forced to finish meals, nor are they required to complete certain meal portions before desserts are permitted. If your child tends to resist eating healthier foods when treats are in sight, please refrain from sending goodies for lunch (they can be reserved for after-school treats!) As a final note, to avoid allergic reactions, germs, etc. children are not permitted to share their food with one another.

Dining with your Child: Parents are invited to join their child for lunch at anytime during the year. Please make "reservations" with the Childcare staff at least one day in advance. By scheduling guests at lunchtime, we hope to avoid having more than one parent visiting each day.

MAINTENANCE, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND RIGHT TO REVIEW CHILD RECORDS

Records for all children are kept in a locked, fire-safe filing cabinet in the office. By state law, your child's records must be kept for seven (7) years and upon the expiration of 7 years, must be destroyed. All records of your child are completely confidential. In order for your child's records to be shared with any agency or individual (other than parents, teaching staff, or Education Director) parents or legal guardians must authorize in writing the release of school records. You have the right to review at any time the contents of your child's file (with the exception of teacher notes).

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

The Richland Academy staff and Board of Directors recognize parents as having the primary responsibility for the health of their children. Although we strongly recommend that medication be given in the home, we realize that the health of some children requires that they receive medication during school hours. Parents should confer with the child's physician to arrange medication time intervals to avoid school hours whenever possible. When medication absolutely must be given during school hours, the following procedures must be followed:

1. Physician's statement and signature will be required for both prescription and non-prescription medications.

2. The physician must complete a written request to the school for administration of medications. The request must include:

- Child's full name
- Name of the medication
- Time of administration
- Purpose of medication
- Medication start and termination dates
- Physician's name & signature
- Dosage amount
- Diagnosis of illness
- Possible side-effects of medication
- Storage information of medication

For your convenience, forms for medication administration are included in your orientation packet. Additional forms can be obtained from the Office.

3. Parents or legal guardians must also submit a signed, written request to the school for administration of the prescribed medication. Medications will not be administered without the parent's permission.

4. Except in emergency situations, prescription and non-prescription medications will not be administered to children who are in Richland Academy's care less than 6 hours during a given day. We request that parents arrange dosage times around school hours.

5. All medications must be in the original bottle with the date and name of the student clearly imprinted on the bottle. Non-prescription medications must also be in the original bottle. To prevent accidental overdose, parents must provide an accurate measuring instrument.

6. All medications with completed formal instructions must be handed directly to a Richland Academy Staff person by the parent. NEVER SEND MEDICATIONS TO SCHOOL IN YOUR CHILD'S BACKPACK, LUNCH BOX, OR HAVE YOUR CHILD DELIVER IT.

Faxes are accepted from your physician. A log of medications administered is maintained by the Staff and kept in the school office. Please keep in mind that these regulations are for the safety and protection of all the students at Richland Academy.

THE MONTESSORI METHOD

The Toddler, Preschool, Kindergarten, and Childcare programs at Richland Academy are devoted to the education and nurturing of all children in a harmonious, supportive, child-centered environment. This "prepared environment" utilizes the philosophy of Dr. Montessori, as it has evolved in the last half century, as a basis for its core curriculum. Richland Academy is also strongly committed to developmentally appropriate practices as described by the Position Statements published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Our environments and curriculums are dedicated to enhancing each child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development while assisting each child in realizing their unique, immense, inner potential.

The Montessori method is a very complex pedagogy that takes years to learn. Through our monthly newsletters, hand-outs, parent meetings, classroom visitations, conferences with teachers, and by additional reading on this subject, we hope parents will be able to gain a deeper understanding of the Montessori Philosophy. [Tomorrow's Child](#) and [Montessori Life](#) are also wonderful resources for interested parents. Information regarding subscriptions to these magazines can be obtained from the Montessori Directress.

As always, if you ever have any questions about ANYTHING, please don't hesitate to ask. Those of us who are further along are always glad to share with those who are just beginning the journey.

MONTESSORI DIRECTRESS

During your observations of our classrooms, you will come to understand why teachers in Montessori schools are often referred to as "Directresses". The teachers in a Montessori classroom work very differently than traditional teachers. Their role is best defined using R.C. Orem's description from the book Montessori Today:

A Montessori teacher is called a directress because she directs the child to learning. She introduces the child to new materials, observes him, and then stands back to let the child discover and learn himself... Her method of teaching is indirect in that she neither imposes upon the child, as in direct teaching, nor abandons him, as in a non-directive permissive approach... The teacher is an observer and her effectiveness in meeting the needs of each child is directly related to the quality of her observation... She strives to recognize the individual needs of the children and introduce materials and ideas at the right moment for each particular child's self-confidence and growth... She respects, not patronizes; shows, not tells; asks, not dictates; leads, not drives; loves not tolerates.

MONTESSORI ENVIRONMENT

The Montessori environment is a carefully prepared "house for children" designed to facilitate maximum independent learning and exploration by the child. The Montessori prepared environment respects and nurtures each child's rhythm of life. It is a calm, ordered space constructed to meet the needs and pace of the child; a living room where the child can investigate, problem solve, experience, and create.

OBSERVATIONS, OPEN DOOR POLICY, AND CLASSROOM VISITATIONS

Observations: We encourage parents to observe their child's class as frequently as possible, with the hopes that all parents will observe their child at least once during the school year. In order to allow you to view your child working naturally in the classroom environment we have installed one-way mirrors on our Toddler and Preschool doors. You will be able to observe your child without them being aware of your presence. Please remember to close the hallway shades before observing (otherwise the children in the rooms can see you through the glass.) We ask that parents sign-up ahead of time to avoid over-crowding at the windows.

Open Door Policy: Richland Academy maintains an "open door policy" for our Toddler and Preschool programs. This means in essence that parents of currently enrolled students may stop by at any time, without warning, to view their child's program. Please be aware that though we welcome parents into our classrooms at any time, we do ask that you follow pre-established guidelines for visitors that will help to minimize disruptions of classroom routines or unexpected "stranger anxiety" for our children.

OFFICE

Richland Academy's office hours are variable. Should you need to meet with office staff, please schedule an appointment. It is also requested that parents and children respect the privacy of this work-space. Please obtain permission of the staff to enter the office. Use of the school telephone may be requested for emergency purposes only.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Toddler: The purpose of our toddler separation schedule is to orient our new toddlers to their environment. The schedule also gives the parents an opportunity to get to know us, while we get to know you. The first weeks' toddler separation schedule will be included in the orientation packet. If needed, based on the child's readiness to separate, additional scheduling will be arranged.

Preprimary: The purpose of the preprimary orientation program is to establish a trusting relationship between teachers and child. Your child will be introduced to the school's ground rules and will discover what is expected of him. Your child will be introduced to the work cycle, how to hang up his coat, wash his hands in preparation for snack, serve his own drink and snack, crumb the table, wash his dishes, and sweep the floor. He will be able to name most of the children and the teachers. The first weeks' preprimary orientation schedule will be included in the orientation packet.

PHYSICAL EXAMS

All children attending any of Richland Academy's programs must have an annual physical exam and supply the school with proof of immunization. Physical forms are distributed prior to enrollment and must be returned to the school within 30 days of your child's start date. Should families be unable to obtain an appointment with their physician within that time frame, please submit a letter to the Director supplying the name of the physician and the appointment date of the physical. Failure to supply the school with immunization records and proof of physical exam within 60 days from date of enrollment will result in immediate withdrawal of student until records are submitted.

R.A.P.O. (Richland Academy Parent Organization)

Richland Academy offers many opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's school. The goals of our school could not be achieved without the combined efforts of the parents who volunteer their time and talents toward the success and improved quality of our programs.

All parents are considered members of the Richland Academy Parent Organization (R.A.P.O.). The purpose of this parent group is to enhance the educational experiences of our children through committees of parent volunteers. A volunteer parent coordinator, who works closely with parent committees, classroom teachers, the Montessori Directress, the Educational Director, and the Board, runs R.A.P.O. The R.A.P.O. coordinator is not, however, a mediator between parents and staff or the Board. Parents with concerns should refer to the section on grievances.

R.A.P.O. typically holds meetings every month. This is a time for committee meetings, fundraising "brainstorms", and socialization among parents. Guest speakers may also be invited to lecture on parenting issues, early childhood education, child safety, and child development. Richland Academy's staff members are also regular guests at R.A.P.O.

meetings, providing presentations on the Montessori Method, Montessori materials, child development, etc.

You will receive a volunteer sheet upon enrollment requesting your participation in R.A.P.O. Please be aware that many of the ways you could become involved in your child's school are NOT time consuming. Thank you in advance for your participation.

SHARING

In a Montessori environment in most instances, children are not asked or forced to share their work or activities. Since parents often misunderstand this sharing policy, it is important to read this section about sharing.

Dr. Montessori felt that a child who was forced to share before the egocentricity natural to childhood made sharing meaningful (and rewarding), would come to have negative ideas about sharing in general. She believed that a child whose rights were respected, and who was encouraged to be kind and respectful of the rights of others, would grow into a person who could freely give of himself and extend this kindness to others. Children would come to comprehend sharing "naturally" and would begin to choose to share of their own volition. The child would come to view sharing as an opportunity to enhance their own play experiences and a way to extend enjoyment to others.

The experiences of thousands of Montessorians have verified the validity of Dr. Montessori's ideas about sharing. Sharing is a developmental milestone. Without rules demanding that children share, parents might expect not to see much sharing amongst the children. Quite the contrary is true. Children in Montessori environments tend to be more respectful of the rights of others and to share with a genuine spirit of camaraderie.

In our classrooms, if a child is working with a piece of equipment, his solitude and right to work without interruption is supremely respected. Children may invite others to join their work, but no child has the right to demand that another child share an activity (unless an activity is designated as "group work"). If a child wants to use an activity, and the current user wishes to continue to work alone, then the child waits until the activity is returned to the shelf. In the Toddler environment, since toddlers typically are not developmentally able to "delay gratification", staff intervene to offer duplicate or similar alternative choices when children do not wish to share self-chosen activities.

SICK POLICY

Your child needs to be well to be able to participate actively in our programs. Due to state mandated child/staff ratios, we cannot accommodate requests for children to stay indoors due to recent illnesses. Such requests, to be accommodated, would require that the entire class miss opportunities to play outside.

In a group situation, there is bound to be a certain amount of contagious illness. But, we feel strongly that the spread of illness can be minimized if all parents are conscientious about keeping sick children at home. Your child may not attend school or childcare if he or she has any of the following symptoms:

- fever above normal within the last 24 hours
- nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- hacking or persistent cough
- dizziness or weakness
- earache or other acute pain
- conjunctivitis or "pink eye"
- persistent green or yellow nasal drainage or sputum
- contagious rashes

In all instances of illness, please be sure to ask your physician about the communicability of your child's illness. Get a definite opinion as to when he will be able to return to school. In some instances (e.g. pink eye), the school may require a physician's note affirming that your child is no longer infectious.

Should your child develop symptoms during school hours, we will request that you make arrangements for your child to be picked up promptly.

SLIPPERS

The staff and children at Richland Academy are asked to wear slippers in our classrooms. Since the children work and play on the floor, the use of slippers helps to keep our rugs clean and sanitary. When purchasing slippers, please choose a style with a back and a rubber or plastic sole. Other varieties are too slippery or can easily get wet. Also, please refrain from purchasing slippers with no backs or huge cartoon heads attached. These tend to cause tripping. A plain, comfortable slipper is recommended. Please label the bottoms of your child's slippers with a permanent marker.

SNACK PROGRAM

Toddler/Preprimary: We would like the children to enjoy regular, healthy snacks and beverages while in our care. Both the Toddler and Preprimary programs request parent participation in helping us to achieve this goal.

Our snack program makes use of a yearly snack calendar in which each child is asked to bring enough snack and snack-related items for a several day period, one time during the school year. Parents are asked to sign up for the block of days they wish to provide snack. If possible, it is suggested that you sign up for the days that includes your child's birthday celebration. A shopping list will be distributed several days prior to your snack date and will include the snack or special items suggested, the quantity required, and the date that they should be brought to school.

Birthday snacks will be served on the celebration day and may be brought in that day. All snacks must come in their original packaging in order to enable the staff to screen foods for possible allergens.

TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

The tax identification number for Richland Academy is 25-1442401.

TOTE BAGS

Please send your child to school each day with a tote bag containing a favorite storybook and a comb. All items must be clearly marked with your child's name. Since tote bags may be used to transport your child's papers from school, please be sure to check it on a daily basis. Please do not send important papers to school in your child's tote bag! Our staff does not regularly look in the children's tote bags. Papers from home should be placed directly in the hall mailbox or handed to the staff.

TOYS

Toddler/Preprimary: We ask that children not bring toys or items from home to school. These toys are often a source of conflict, competition, and distraction from the carefully prepared environment. Please explain to your child that some things simply belong at home. Children who need that special something from home to ease the transition to school will be asked to keep the item in the car. We appreciate your help in encouraging your child to respect this rule. Special mementos, treasures, and creatures your child would like to share with his classmates may be brought to school when prior arrangements have been made with the teaching staff.

TUITION/ FINANCIAL AGREEMENTS

Since Richland Academy is a nonprofit organization, all operating expenses come out of tuition monies and collected childcare fees. Yearly tuition and childcare fees are determined through careful assessment of the school's budgetary needs. Budgets are available for review upon request. No profit and very little margin of error are incorporated into the budget. For this reason, it is imperative that your tuition payments be made promptly and in the correct, full amount. Timely payments of your tuition allow us to pay our bills promptly and meet our payroll.

Toddler/Preprimary Programs: The Montessori programs are tuition-based programs. Tuition for these programs pays for your child's participation in our academic program only. Childcare fees are assessed separately. Once you have enrolled your child in our academic programs, we reserve a space for your child for the entire school year. If for any reason you withdraw your child during the school year, you will be held responsible for the remaining tuition owed for the full school year (as per the Tuition Agreement form). The exception is made for withdrawals during the probationary period (30 days from date of enrollment), or should families relocate their primary residence to an area outside a 45-minute commute to the school. In all instances of withdrawal, registration fees and tuition deposits are non-refundable. See Withdrawal Policy for more information.

Tuition Payments: Yearly tuition is divided into 10 (ten) monthly installments with the first payment due August 1st and the final tuition payment due May 1st. Please be reminded that tuition fees are due on or before the first of each month. A \$25.00 penalty fee for late payments will be charged after the fifth of each month. This fee is compounded monthly.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Toddler/Preprimary Programs: At the time you registered your child in our Toddler, Preschool or Kindergarten programs, the school reserved a space for your child for the entire school year. Your full tuition was calculated into our operational budget. On the tuition agreement form it states: *"Please be aware that the tuition fee is in no way lessened by the absence or departure of a student during the September to May school year."* Our financial policy is that if for any reason you withdraw your child from the school, you will be held responsible for the remaining tuition owed for the full school year as per the Tuition Agreement Form. Exceptions are made for withdrawals during the 30-day probationary period and for withdrawals due to relocation of primary residency. Withdrawals for these reasons must be made in writing.

- **Withdrawals Due To Relocation:** When families relocate residency to an area outside a 45-minute commute to school, notice must be given to the school a minimum of two weeks prior to the date of withdrawal. Families will remain responsible for tuition during the notice period.
- **Withdrawals During Probationary Period:** The first 30 days of enrollment constitutes the "probationary period." During the probationary period, staff and parents evaluate the child's readiness for our Montessori environment. If the staff and/or parents agree that the child is not ready, s/he may be withdrawn and the parents are released from further tuition payments.

WORK

In the Montessori classrooms, any activity a child chooses is referred to as his or her "work." As long as the child is engaged in purposeful activity (meaning an activity requiring the effort of the mind and body working together), his activity is considered his "work." Please keep in mind the difference between the purposes adults see in "work" and a child's purposes. Adults "work" to get the job done, preferably in the quickest, most efficient way. A child, on the other hand, "works" for entirely different reasons. The child pursues activities for the pleasure of the process, not for the end result or the product. Dr. Montessori wrote that the adult works to perfect the environment while the child works to perfect herself. In a Montessori classroom, adults admire how the children concentrate during their work and how carefully they execute a task. We notice their ability to work independently and to recall the series of steps necessary to complete an activity. We commend their efforts, their learning strategies, their creativity and inventive solutions. In short, all the processes that will provide a solid foundation for future learning.

In a Montessori classroom, we do not point out errors or mistakes the children have made in their work. To do so, would negate the value of the "process" and may injure a child's self-esteem and self-determination. Errors give us valuable information about a child's level of understanding, as well as important clues regarding thinking strategies. The child will have many opportunities to be exposed to the "proper" way/answer during their years in our classroom. We would appreciate your cooperation with papers that may come home with errors. The primary focus is the value of effort and the emerging critical thinking skills and thought processes.

Please be aware that the majority of the materials in a Montessori classroom are concrete, hands-on, sensorial-based manipulatives. Since there is very little "paper & pencil" work in a primary classroom, please don't ask your child for proof of his day's work. A child can work very hard at school only to have the value of this hard work negated by the parent's question: "Do you have any papers for me?" Because of such "parent pressure" for proof of work, many Montessori schools do not permit the children to take their papers home. Montessori children are encouraged to work for their own self-satisfaction and not for the praise of their parents or teachers.

If you are curious about what your child is doing at school, please feel free to observe, visit the classroom, or request a conference with your child's teacher.