



POLICY DOCUMENTS

The Port Elizabeth Montessori School MISSION STATEMENT

Our Vision

Is to provide our children with
An education that will make them independent,
Confident and positive citizens who will
Actively contribute to a changing society.

Our Mission

Is to prepare our children
For the future with optimism.

Our Aim

Is to foster an attitude of
“Learning to Love to Learn”

**When I hear it, I forget it.
When I see it, I remember it.
When I do it, I understand it.**

Balancing hearts, heads and hands.

The Port Elizabeth Montessori School

Admissions and General Policy (1995)

The Port Elizabeth Montessori School subscribes to and considers the following principles in deciding on the compatibility of applicants:

PRINCIPLES:

1. The Port Elizabeth Montessori School adheres to and practices the principle of non-discrimination, including discrimination based on race, gender, disability, religion, cultural or social origin, thereby striving towards a multicultural and multiracial community.
2. The Port Elizabeth Montessori School bases its approach to education on the Montessori educational philosophy, which recognises the importance of Early Childhood Education (birth to 9 years), and is committed to this approach of education. Parents of learners are expected to understand the Montessori philosophy and be committed thereto.

RULES:

1. Acceptance of an applicant will only be confirmed after an interview has been conducted between both parents (where applicable) and the directress/es and principal, should the School deem this necessary.
2. Parents will not be expected to subsidize the cost of the education of other learners at The Port Elizabeth Montessori School.
3. The Port Elizabeth Montessori School will consider applications in respect of learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN), subject to availability resources and the compatibility between school and learner.
4. Parents must, in writing, agree to and be bound by the Terms and Conditions of Enrolment. This is completed annually in the signing of the Contract of Enrolment.

The Port Elizabeth Montessori School Discipline Policy (1995)

Our approach to discipline is one that aims to encourage self-discipline through interaction with the prepared environment and one another. If a child is hurting others, preventing others from fulfilling their needs, and/or disrupting the class, the directress implements the following procedures:

1. For minor disruptions, the directress will guide the child to an activity that will help him/her settle or redirect the child to their work. Should this fail, the child will have timeout to consider what they need to change in order to be a part of the classroom community.
2. Hurting others, rudeness or causing damage to anything within the environment is not acceptable behaviour and cannot be allowed. The child will be removed from the problem situation and asked to sit quietly and think about his/her actions. The child may remain within the classroom, if this is deemed appropriate by the directress. After a short period of time, the directress and the child will discuss what happened and (if applicable) the child will apologise to anyone who has been hurt. The child then rejoins normal activities.
3. If a child is persistently disruptive and displays unhappy, unco-operative behaviour, the directress will contact the parents to discuss possible causes and solutions. Likewise, we ask parents to contact the school should they notice a change in behaviour.
4. If a child is being unruly and posing a threat to the safety, development and well being of the other children, the parents will be contacted and asked to fetch their child from school immediately. This is a rare occurrence and only implemented once all other attempts at resolving the situation have been tried. Follow up meetings with the parents will then be held.
5. Under no circumstances will any member of staff at the School administer corporal punishment.

Our approach to discipline is not intended to be "punishment" but it is aimed at helping the child, in a gentle but firm way, realise the social limits of his/her community and develop an awareness of consistent and natural consequences.

We feel that in a supportive environment, where the child's limits are clearly and consistently defined (without being restrictive), self-discipline can be developed, as Maria Montessori advocated. The most important aspect of Montessori's approach is realising that a child cannot truly exercise freedom unless he/she knows the limits of that freedom.... Liberty with limits is the key idea.

The Port Elizabeth Montessori School School Governance (2001)

There is a Management Committee in place to ensure the parents and educator's rights are upheld.

The responsibilities of the Management Committee include the following:

1. Defining the Mission of the school and clarifying its philosophy;
 2. Establishing policies within which the mission can be fulfilled. These policies govern the day-to-day operation of the school in areas such as: legal issues, financial matters, matters related to learners and similar.
 3. Preparing a budget annually for presentation to the Parent/Teacher body and give final approval;
 4. Working through the Head/Principal, ensuring all laws and regulations are being followed and that the day-to-day operation is consistent with Policy and our Mission and philosophy;
 5. Working with the Head and representative within the school, taking the leadership role in a process of on-going strategic planning; Adopting from time to time long term plans and provide structure for their implementation;
 6. Assuming a key role in fund raising for the school and co-ordinating any related functions;
 7. Serving as ambassadors for the school, promoting its good name and letting the public and constituency know about its success and future growth;
 8. Members of the Management Committee serve on a voluntary basis and for a minimum period of three years, the norm within Montessori education;
 9. Prospective members may volunteer their services to the Management Committee and the current Management Committee can evaluate their skills and use these where needed.
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10. A prerequisite for Management Committee members is that they have been members of the school community for at least two years (as either educators or parents).

The 2004 Management Committee is comprised of the following members:

Chairperson and Parent Representative

Advocate Patrick Scott

The Founding Head/Principal

Samantha Streak

Educators Representative

Rita van Heerden

Financial Adviser and Appointed Accounting Officer

Rodney Gibson of Gibson and Associates

The Port Elizabeth Montessori School Policy on School Readiness (2003)

It is a challenging prospect determining a formal School Readiness Policy whilst maintaining the Montessori philosophy and the vision Maria Montessori had for education. As Grade R forms part of compulsory education in South Africa from January 2004, we felt it important and now time to define a School Readiness Policy. In considering any policy for our school, we use as the foundation what we believe are the fundamental tenets of Montessori Education:

1. All children are unique individuals who express their talents, capabilities and differences in a variety of ways;
2. A responsibility of the school is to recognise and support these differences in the individual whilst bearing in mind the importance of the child feeling confident within their peer community;
3. The individual's development needs to be such that there is a valuable contribution being made, on the appropriate level, to the group as a whole.
4. The individual child is considered as a whole. The physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, moral/spiritual and cognitive needs and interests are inseparable and equally important in all decision-making processes.
5. The aim of Montessori education is to foster competent, responsible, adaptive citizens who are lifelong learners and problem solvers;
6. Each child learns at his/her own pace and norms are used as a guideline and direction for the teacher;
7. It is always the child's best interests that are examined and any and all decisions made by both parents and teachers need to consider these first and foremost. We are, as Maria Montessori stated, required to "Follow the Child."
8. The ideal time frame for children to benefit from Montessori Education is to complete the full three year cycle in each environment i.e. 3-6 for preschool; 6 (turning 7) to 9 for lower primary; 9 (turning 10) to 12 for upper primary. We are aware that this is not always the case for every child but we do recognise that, in our experience, it is not advantageous for the child to not have the opportunity to complete a cycle.

At all times, we need to consider the impact and implications of the Department of Education's Policies and Law that govern Independent Schools. We need to ensure that we do not contravene any of these and jeopardise the future of the School and the good working relationship that exists between the School and the Department. The same applies to any guidelines established by The South African Montessori Association.

September 2003

A FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP: OUR POLICY (2001)

We, at The Port Elizabeth Montessori School, are committed to promoting an effective family-school partnership through the following principles.

It is our hope that both the School and the families it serves recognise that effective partnerships are characterised by mutual respect, open communication, a shared commitment to collaboration, clearly defined responsibilities and a common vision for each child.

THE SCHOOL:

- Recognises that its effectiveness in helping the child develop his or her potential is directly influenced by its effectiveness in helping the family to do the same.
- Presents to parents its philosophy, programme and practices, and encourages dialogue that assist parents in clarifying their expectations and goals for the child.
- Keeps parents well informed through reports, parent-teacher meetings, newsletters, published policies and informal conversations.
- Ensures that teachers are accessible to parents, that they model candid and open dialogue and seek and value the parents' perspective on the child.
- Offers and supports a variety of parent education opportunities including suggestions of effective ways for parents to support the educational process.
- Actively seeks the knowledge it needs to work effectively with a diverse parent body.

THE FAMILY:

- Acknowledges that participation in the school allows the opportunity to create connections within the school community.
- Selects the school by seeking an optimal match between the child's needs, parental expectations, and the school's philosophy and services.
- Supports the school's policies and is involved in the life of the school.

- Values the school's perspective on the child. When concerns arise, the parents seek information directly from the school in order to best address the concern.
- Provides a home environment that supports the development of positive self-esteem, learning attitudes and habits, and social and intellectual competence.
- Supports the stability and continuation of the school by fulfilment of these responsibilities and other such as timely arrival and departure, payment, compliance with enrolment agreements and the promotion of enrolment in the school.
- Shares with the school any religious, cultural, medical or personal information that the school may need to serve the child and family best.

INCLUSION FOR ALL: OUR POLICY

Requirements for every child in our School (2001)

Maria Montessori began her work with “mentally deficient” children in public asylums. Based upon her studies of early pioneers in the field of special education and her observations of children using concrete learning materials that she accepted and developed, Montessori demonstrated that significant physical and cognitive development was possible for children with special needs whom society had abandoned.

Many characteristics of the Montessori materials and learning environment support the developmental needs of all children and, additionally, reflect what the field of special education considers to be best practice techniques. This makes the Montessori schools a viable option for a programme of inclusion.

Children with developmental needs form a very diverse group, with some developmental needs being quite different from those of typically developing peers. However it is important to recognise that all children, with or without diagnosed special needs, have many more commonly held needs that are accommodated in our learning environment, and that all children, at different times in their lives, go through times of being “special needs learners.”

Some important points to note for all of the children in our environment:

- Montessori Education recognises that each child learns with a unique style and pace. It is a child-centred, holistic approach acknowledging that the child’s developmental and education involves many aspects: physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral/spiritual. This means that, through our observations, we direct the children’s daily activities based on their own needs, strengths and developmental stages.
- The Montessori environment changes and grows with the developmental needs of the child. The materials offer concrete, multi-sensory experiences, which actively engage children, correcting, giving feedback and increasing the child’s opportunities for self-directed work. The materials contain many aims or goals and can often be explored at different levels. Often, the environment allows children with quite different developmental needs to work and learn side-by-side with the same materials.
- The Montessori Environment contains a multi-age span. This fosters a sense of community in which children come to naturally help one another. Every member is valued for his or her contribution to the whole. What this gives all the children is the chance to interact with a

wide range of people, provides motivation and opportunities to share their skills and strengths.

- Team teaching is typical in a Montessori environment, where directresses work together sharing information and responsibility. They also work closely with other professionals where necessary, providing a trans-disciplinary approach.
- Montessori philosophy recognises that parents are an integral part of the child's education and as such should assume equal responsibility in the process of the child's education.
- Our approach, whilst focussed on the individual child, must also nurture and support the group as a whole.

THE PRACTICALITIES:

- There are numerous sources of help out there for children who are experiencing difficulties. We, as the School, have a wide range of experiences in referring to different professionals and are committed to assisting parents in finding the right match.
- Should any problems arise that require a professional's input, we will discuss this with you immediately and advise you on whom to approach. It is really important to note that once we do make an assessment and require this additional input, we have observed the child carefully and base our assessment on a genuine concern for the child's development. We thus require you to take the necessary action and follow up on the recommendation, within two weeks.
- Please inform us of the process that is being followed which can sometimes take time. The most important thing we need to know is that you are taking action on behalf of your child. Provide us with any and all written reports as well as regular updates on his/her progress.
- Every professional will agree that early intervention is the key to resolving problems, as well as consistent and intensive focus on the problem.
- Montessori Education is a holistic one that looks at every aspect of the child (physical, emotional, social, cognitive, moral/spiritual) and this includes aspects such as diet, discipline structures, allergies, home circumstances etc. Although it may seem invasive, we do require as much information about the child as possible such as medical and personal information. Please have our assurances that all information given to the school is treated with the utmost respect and confidence and is only sought in order to help the child reach his/her potential.

- Each child is at all times treated as an individual, within the structure of a group. Our school's aim is to prepare the children for the world in such a way that they make a valuable contribution and have a positive experience of life. This process starts within our school environment and is an essential part of Montessori education.
- Should one child's behaviour become unreasonably disruptive, there is a significant lack of progress, and there is little or no parental support for getting the requested help, we will have no other choice but to ask you to remove your child from the school. At no time will one child's inappropriate or negative behaviour be allowed to interfere with the progress and development of the group as a whole. This would be a final resort after attempting to find resolution in every possible area.
- Being open and honest is the key to a successful family-school relationship. The education of each child is most definitely a team effort between the child, the parents and the school.

MONTESSORI KEY CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES (2001)

Based on the Key Concepts and Practices as defined by The American Montessori Society, The Port Elizabeth Montessori School is committed to promoting quality Montessori education for all children, from birth to eighteen years, based on these key concepts:

- The aim of Montessori education is to foster competent, responsible, adaptive citizens who are lifelong learners and problem solvers.
- Learning occurs in an inquiring, co-operative, nurturing atmosphere. Students increase their own knowledge through self-and teacher-initiated experiences.
- Learning takes place through the senses. Students learn by manipulating materials and interacting with others. These meaningful experiences are the foundation for abstract understanding of ideas.
- The individual is considered as a whole. The physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, moral/spiritual and cognitive needs and interests are inseparable and equally important.
- Respect and caring attitudes for oneself, others, the environment and all life are necessary.

The Montessori Directress is educated in these areas:

- Human growth and development.
- Observational skills to match the learners' developmental needs with the materials and activities. This allows the teacher to guide learners in creating their individual learning plan, especially in the primary classes.
- An open-ended choice of materials and equipment that empower directresses to design their own developmentally responsive, culturally relevant learning environment.
- Teaching strategies that support and facilitate the unique and total growth of each individual.
- Classroom leadership skills that foster a nurturing environment that is physically and psychologically supportive of learning.

- The directresses are also on a path of lifelong learning and seek to acquire further knowledge that will support them in their work and growth.

A Montessori classroom must have these basic characteristics at all levels:

- Teachers educated in the Montessori philosophy and methodology appropriate to the age level they are teaching, who have the ability and dedication to put the key concepts into practice and who have a firm and unequivocal belief in the Montessori Method of Education.
- A partnership with the family. The family is considered to be an integral part of the individual's total development.
- A multi-aged, multi-graded, heterogeneous group of learners.
- A diverse set of Montessori materials, activities and experiences that are designed to foster physical, intellectual, creative and social independence.
- A schedule that allows large blocks of uninterrupted time to problem solve, to see the interdisciplinary connections of knowledge, and to create new ideas.
- A classroom atmosphere that encourages social interaction for cooperative learning, peer teaching, psychological security and emotional development.

LANGUAGE POLICY (2002)

Language of Learning and Teaching

1. Language of Instruction is English
2. First Additional Language is Afrikaans (chosen due to this being the primary option of the High Schools into which the children will feed on completion of grade 7).
3. Second Additional Language is Xhosa.
4. Languages taught in the school reflect the learner-communities home languages, and policy will be adapted according to this where necessary.
5. The Montessori Approach to teaching and learning additional languages is an experiential one, giving the children the knowledge and structures that a mother tongue speaker would find relevant.
6. As at 2003, additional languages are introduced in grade three and continue being taught up to and including grade 7.
7. From 2004, with the implementation of the RNCS, conversational and introductory additional language teaching will begin in grade R.
8. We believe our policy to be within the guidelines provided for in the Language in Education Policy (1997) issued by the Department of Education.

CHILDHOOD DISEASES (1995)

Disease	Child may return to School	Incubation Period	Signs & Symptoms
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)	On submission of medical certificate.		Failure of normal growth, anaemia, fever, diarrhoea, frequent infections, heart problems, Hepatitis, neurological problems.
Chicken Pox	14 days after appearance of rash or on submission of a medical certificate.	Approximately 21 days.	Slight fever and feeling of unwellness. There may be headache and aching in the muscles. At this stage, tiny blisters form in the mouth and throat.
Cholera	On submission of a medical certificate and according to quarantine measures.		
Diphtheria	On submission of a medical certificate and after two nose and two throat swabs, at appropriate intervals, prove negative.		Fever, sore throat, headache, difficulty in swallowing and enlarged lymph nodes in the neck.
Epidemic typhus	On submission of a medical certificate		
German Measles (Rubella)	Seven days after appearance of rash and on submission of medical certificate.	Approximately 21-32 days	A pink rash on the forehead, behind the ears and on the trunk, is often the first sign. Slight temperature and listlessness may be present. Lymph nodes at the back of the neck enlarge.
Haemorrhage fever diseases of Africa.	On submission of medical certificate.		
Haemorrhage virus conjunctivitis	Seven days after beginning of symptoms and on submission of medical certificate		Feeling of irritation in the eye, redness. Often lashes are glued with dried discharge.
Hepatitis A	Seven days after appearance of jaundice and on submission of medical certificate.		Fever, severe loss of appetite, loss of energy, slight enlargement of the liver with tenderness, yellowing of the skin (jaundice), and darkening of the urine.
Leprosy	On submission of medical certificate.		
Louse infestation	After complete cleansing and delousing and removal of nits on head, body and clothing.		Intense itching.

Disease	Child may return to School	Incubation Period	Signs & Symptoms
Measles	Seven days after appearance of rash and on submission of medical certificate.	Approximately 20-25 days	Raised temperature, child appears to have severe cold with dry cough and irritated red eyes. Fever, cough, sneezing, general misery, redness of the eyes and an irregular, red, mottled, slightly raised rash
Menningococccernia	On submission of medical certificate		Headache, fever and drowsiness. Weakness of muscles, speech disturbances, neck stiffness, vomiting.
Mumps	Nine days after appearance of swelling and on submission of medical certificate	Approximately 27-35 days	Fever is brief, 2-3 days. Swelling of the main pair of salivary glands. Headache if severe.
Plague	On submission of medical certificate		
Poliomyelitis	On submission of medical certificate		Headache, fever and sometimes vomiting. If severe, headache, neck stiffness, high fever and progressive muscle weakness and paralysis.
Scabies	After proper treatment and submission of a medical certificate		Intense itching and constant scratching.
Scarlet Fever	On submission of medical certificate	Several days	The tongue is at first coated white, then the coating peels off to leave a raw 'strawberry' look. Tonsillitis, fever, abdominal pain and vomiting. Fever is peak on the second day.
Tuberculosis of the lungs	On submission of medical certificate		Fever, cough-possibly with chest pains, night sweats, swollen glands, possible headache and stiff neck.
Typhoid fever	On submission of a medical certificate. After negative stool and urine tests have been done at appropriate intervals (at least 48 hours) and not less than 72 hours after cessation of antibiotic therapy.		
Whooping cough	21 days after beginning of symptoms and on submission of a medical certificate.	Approximately 2-3 weeks	First signs are cold without temperature and with a mild cough and irritated eyes. 7 to 14 days later, cough begins in violent spasms.