

WOODLAWN

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Montessori Parent Guide

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Dear Parents,

We would like to welcome you and your child to the Montessori community. At Woodlawn Preparatory School your child will experience a Montessori learning environment. Montessori education is a philosophy that is designed to guide the child through the various stages of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth. The students absorb learning through their senses. All learning activities emerge from the use of instructional materials that enable the child to use his senses as aids to learning.

The primary goal of Woodlawn Preparatory School's Montessori environment is to help students reach their fullest potential in all areas of life. Our activities promote the development of social skills, emotional growth, physical coordination, spiritual growth, as well as cognitive preparation. As a result, this guide was created in an effort to provide some general information about the Montessori program for our new parents.

Many parents ask, "What is the Montessori approach?" Here are a few highlights listed:

1. Multi-age classrooms
2. Safe and nurturing classroom environment
3. Child-centered learning activities
4. Cross-discipline learning
5. Individualized instruction and curriculum
6. Writing before reading
7. Assessment by portfolio, checklist, anecdotal notation, and performance
8. Development of self-discipline, independence, and responsibility
9. Allowing self-discovery instead of direct instruction
10. Fostering scientific and mathematical aptitudes
11. Nurturing appreciation for history
12. Instilling appreciation for cultural differences
13. School setting with a "family atmosphere"

We are proud to offer Columbia and the surrounding communities our Montessori program. The Woodlawn Preparatory School and its Montessori teachers will provide a stimulating learning environment in which all students' learning needs will be met. If you feel that you would like additional information about WPS after reading the information contained in this guide, feel free to call, email, or visit us on the web. You can also learn more about Montessori by simply going to www.amshq.org. Again, we welcome you to Woodlawn Preparatory School and the Montessori community and look forward to serving you and your child in the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,
Darin G. Tubb, EdD
Principal

Montessori vs Traditional Education

Montessori

Start at school early (2-3 years)
Three year age range in classroom
Freedom to move around the room
Family atmosphere
Individual and small group lessons
Self-correcting materials
Natural and logical consequences
Child-centered environment
Long, free work periods
Enhanced curriculum
Emphasis on learning
Emphasis on “self” control
Peace in education
Strong school/home ties
Freedom within limits
Observation based progress report
and mastery of materials

Traditional

Start at school late (5-6 years)
One age (grade) in a classroom
Seated at desks
Little socialization
Large group lessons
Teacher as source of answers
Rewards and punishments
Teacher-centered environment
Planned activities all day
Grade-level only curriculum
Emphasis on grades
Teacher as disciplinarian
Punishment
Little parent involvement
Controlling environment
Graded report cards

"Mental development must be connected with movement and dependent on it."
-Maria Montessori

Multi-age Group Classrooms

Montessori education is a system for the education of children from birth through age eighteen. It is based upon principles developed by Dr. Maria Montessori throughout her life.

The focus of this system is the development of materials, educational techniques, and observations, which support the natural development of children. The teacher in a Montessori classroom serves less as an “instructor” and more as a guide and facilitator. Children are encouraged to “learn how to learn,” thus gaining independence and self-confidence. Because the method is based on developmentally appropriate activities, the child often learns through the process of education by doing.

The Montessori classroom is designed to accommodate various stages of development in children, which occur in roughly three-year cycles. From birth to three years of age the child is absorbing directly from the environment, almost as a sponge. It is during this phase that many language and motor skills are acquired without formal education.

During the second phase from three to six years of age, the child reaches a different stage in which repetition and manipulation of the environment are critical to the development of concentration, coordination, independence, and a sense of order. The child learns skills for everyday living, sorting, grading, classifying – all which lead to the development of writing, reading, and a mathematical mind.

When the child reaches the next phase of development, ages six to nine, the imagination of the child is the key to learning. At this stage there is an increasing awareness of the world and an interest in its wonders. The classroom can now excite the child by using this increased imagination to explore the universe. During this phase the child is presented with “the big picture,” an overview of the relationship of things. The curriculum works from the large concept to the more refined. Concepts are introduced through hands-on materials that encourage and engage the child and assist in an understanding of concepts before they are committed to memory.

As the child enters the next phase, from nine to twelve, the world is an ever-expanding place. The horizons of the imagination increase and concepts may be presented and abstracted with fewer manipulative materials. The students’ hands-on activities broaden in scope and include practical application outside the classroom. Projects become more involved and diverse in nature.

Youth in the early years, from twelve to fifteen, are coming to terms with their new identity as an adolescent and the world outside the family and school. This is a time of dissonance as childhood ends and a new identity emerges. During this time, youth seek to understand their place in society and search for opportunities to contribute. They are naturally drawn to causes that involve high ideals. They prefer to take on projects that require action and they believe they can make a positive difference in the world. Montessori coined a new term “valorization” to describe the process the adolescent must go through in integrating a more mature identity and the sense of being able to succeed in life by his/her own efforts.

Because the child goes through these various stages, Montessori classrooms are organized in three-year groupings. This allows greater flexibility in meeting each child’s individual needs and permits the child to develop with fewer social transitions. The environment becomes the “teacher,” with the child as the initiator of his/her own education.

Accreditations and Affiliations

Woodlawn Preparatory School understands the importance of ensuring the quality and fidelity of our educational program by following the regulations, guidelines, and policies of certain accrediting organizations. Therefore, as part of a multiyear process, we are seeking accreditation with the following organizations:

American Montessori Society (member)

International Montessori Council (member)

Midsouth Association of Independent Schools (Full Accreditation)

Cognia, formerly AdvancED (Full Accreditation)

Montessori Teacher Qualifications

Lead teachers at Woodlawn Preparatory School adhere to the same standards required by the Mississippi Department of Education to teach in a public school setting. That is, they hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in education and a Class A Mississippi teaching license.

Additionally, Montessori teachers are required to complete a minimum of 12 months of additional Montessori curriculum coursework, on-site training, internship, and mentoring in order to receive their Montessori Early Childhood (3-6), Lower Elementary (6-9), and Upper Elementary (9-12) certifications.

Student Uniform Requirements

Crest Embroidering

Students will be required to have the school crest embroidered on all uniform tops. These are to be taken to Anne's Embroidery at 730 Main Street in Columbia. The per item charge is \$8.00.

Uniform Code

All students at Woodlawn Preparatory School will be required to wear school uniforms on a daily basis. It is the responsibility of the parent to purchase these uniforms for their child.

Girls will wear a light blue buttoned-down blouse or a navy, gray, or light blue polo shirt paired with the Woodlawn Preparatory School plaid or navy knee length skirt or jumper. Girls may also wear navy or gray polo dresses. Leggings or tights of school colors may also be worn.

Boys will wear a light blue buttoned-down shirt or a navy, gray, or light blue polo shirt paired with gray or navy slacks. Boys may also wear knee length uniform shorts in navy, or light gray. Boys will wear a black or brown belt.

Shoes: Tennis shoes, canvas shoes or leather shoes are acceptable. No sandals or boots will be allowed for boys or girls.

Outerwear: All outerwear worn inside the classroom should follow uniform colors. This includes coats, sweaters, cardigans, etc.

Purchasing

Woodlawn Prep does not have a designated school uniform provider. Most items may be purchased at various retail clothing stores.

Uniform Exceptions

Each Thursday and Friday of school students may wear a WPS t-shirt with their uniform bottoms. WPS t-shirt and apparel orders are done periodically through the year. There will also be special days announced during the school year when uniforms will not be required.

Student Progress Monitoring

It is the Montessori philosophy that grades are similar to other extrinsic rewards; they have little or no lasting effect on a child's efforts or achievements. The Montessori approach nurtures the motivation that comes from within, kindling the child's natural desire to learn. Montessori teachers closely observe each child's progress and readiness to advance to new lessons. Quarterly family conferences will be held in order for you to be apprised of your child's progress throughout the year and communication folders are sent home daily regarding student behavior, classroom activities, calendars, and schedules of upcoming events. Children in grades K and up do take the Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition at the beginning and end of each school year. This is a nationally-based norm-referenced standardized test. Students in 1st grade and higher may also participate in teacher created unit quizzes, and math and spelling assessments and assignments.

Tuition and Fees

The 2023-2024 school year tuition for Woodlawn Preparatory School is as follows:

1st child enrolled - \$412.50/month

2nd child enrolled - \$357.50/month

3rd child enrolled - \$302.50/month

Each child thereafter - \$302.50/month

Tuition will be processed through the Headmaster Online program. After enrollment, parents will be given a username and password to set up a Headmaster Online account. You may set up payments through automatic draft from your checking account as 10 payments from August through May or initiate one-time payments each month. Payments are due on the first of each month. Payments are considered late after the 10th of the month and a \$25 late fee is added. If no payment is received by the 15th of the month, parents are asked to not have their child return to school until the balance is cleared.

There is a non-refundable registration fee of \$200.00 due at the time of registration.

Enrollment Process

The process for enrollment requires that a potential student attends a partial day (3 or more hours) at the school in order to observe the classroom environment and allow for the teachers to observe the student. After the student observation, teachers consult with the head of school to help make a determination as to student's potential to succeed in the Montessori academic and social setting. The school also requires a parent to submit the most current quarterly grades, end of year grades, and standardized test scores from the previous school in order to help make a determination for enrollment.

The following is required for enrollment:

- Paid \$200.00 Registration Fee
- Form No. 121 Certificate of Immunization Compliance / Religious Exemption Form No. 139
- Birth Certificate Copy
- Parent Photo ID Copy

School Days and Hours

Woodlawn Preparatory School has endeavored to comply with Mississippi Department of Education regulations for independent schools and the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools and Cognia in creating a school week with 27.5 hours or more of instructional time. However, for the sake of valuing the time families have together, we have implemented a 4-day school week scheduled Monday through Thursday. The school hours are scheduled between 7:30 a.m. and 3:40 p.m. It is expected that all children (including 3 and 4 year olds) arrive on time and stay for the whole day each of the 4 scheduled school days. The school will be opened to students on Fridays at no extra tuition cost for parents who wish their child to attend 5 days a week. Fridays will be a day of regular classroom work activities in order to provide extra time for your child's academic and social development. School clubs and practical life activities will also be offered on these days. Attendance is not required on Fridays.

Instructional Schedule

One of the key components of the Montessori classroom is the Prepared Environment. A Montessori classroom has been prepared with the specific purpose of providing opportunities for the student to discover and explore concepts using Montessori materials. Learning to carry materials with care, control one's body, and to know when to be quiet or silent, all add to the beautiful quality of the Montessori Prepared Environment. The teacher in the classroom serves to guide the child as they learn about themselves, others, and the world.

On a daily basis, students work in three-hour work cycles. This three-hour time frame is uninterrupted. The work cycle is the time period in which the students are engaged in lessons. Student lessons are

given in four formats. They are individual lessons, small group lessons, child-led lessons, and/or class presentations. The students are free to work in the four main work areas on lessons that they have been introduced to by their teachers. Those four main work areas are practical life, sensorial, language and math. In addition, students are engaged in cultural studies and science. During the work cycle, the teacher periodically observes students working and records anecdotal notes on students' strengths and weaknesses to help drive their instructional decisions and develop work plans according to their individual needs.

At some point at the beginning of the school morning, students gather together for community time. This time allows students and teachers to build community in an age-appropriate manner, say a prayer to start their day, participate in a Bible-based devotion, recite the pledge, sing, share and exchange ideas, show and tell, review the ground rules, review classroom routines, listen to read-alouds, and other exciting things.

On a bi-monthly basis, students in Kindergarten through 5th grade will also participate in a 30 minute chapel service led by the Woodlawn Church Children's Pastor, or community guest speakers. This chapel service is designed to offer a non-denominational perspective for addressing the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of children and adolescents.

Lunch

Lunch is a social occasion for the students. It will be a time for children to learn proper dining etiquette and manners in a family setting. Lunch will not be provided by Woodlawn Preparatory School. It is the parent's responsibility to provide a healthy lunch to satisfy your child's dietary needs. A refrigerator and microwaves are available for student use. Teachers will help younger children in preparing their lunch and opening food containers. Seeds Cafe lunch service is offered Monday through Thursday. Menus are provided to parents and preorders are taken a week prior and returned to the school. Payments will be made directly to Seeds Cafe.

Snack

Our Montessori students are offered a snack each morning. Students take turns sitting at the table and helping themselves to whatever food has been set out. 3-6 Students very much enjoy bringing snacks from home for their classmates. So, we ask parents of each student to be responsible for providing morning snacks about once a month (your child's teacher will issue a snack schedule monthly). A list of food allergies will be sent home to assist in choosing snacks for the entire class. Students in First Grade and higher will be responsible for providing their own healthy snack each day if they choose to bring one.

Physical Education

Research supports the relationship between physical education programs and the development of social skills, academic performance, and increased attendance, and a reduction in discipline referrals.

At Woodlawn Preparatory School, we also understand that correlation between physical activities and developing the whole child; therefore, all of our 3-6 Montessori students receive a total of 40 minutes of structured physical activity a day. Sometimes, the 40 minutes of structured physical activity is broken into two 20 minute intervals. The students will engage in structured physical activities on the school's playground and/or inside their classrooms/school building. The 6-9 and 9-12 students receive a total of 30 minutes of physical activity a day. Each of these classes also receive 50 minutes of P.E. during a Resource Class each week.

On rainy days, students will engage in indoor physical activities with classmates in our gymnasium or classrooms. On sunny bright days, they will engage in outdoor physical activities. These activities range from whole group games to small group activities and individual playground play.

Quiet/Rest Time

In the afternoons, our three and four-year-old students have approximately 2 hours to rest supervised by the assistant teacher. This time will allow smaller students to rejuvenate and prepare them for their next task before ending their school day. During this time, the lead teacher will be engaged in guided group reading, math concepts, and literacy practice with our kindergarteners, providing remediation, preparing work plans for individual students, and preparing for the next school day.

Parent-School Partnership

“Education requires parents, teachers, and child to work together in cooperation; a weakness in any one of these decreases the efficiency of the others while inhibiting the development of the child.”

-Maria Montessori

In the Montessori environment at Woodlawn Preparatory School, we will address the needs of children holistically. Our environments permit children to learn about and express themselves as unique individuals. We support the children's growth and the integration of personal, social, and academic aspects of development. Communication between parent and school is essential for this process to truly help your child, as it forms a partnership between home and school.

The Montessori Method depends heavily on family/parental involvement at school and at home. Parental involvement will enrich the experience that both you and your child have at Woodlawn Preparatory School. Maria Montessori said, “*Our intervention in this marvelous process is essential; we are here to offer this life, which came into the world by itself, the means necessary for its development.*”

Woodlawn Preparatory School families are expected to attend quarterly scheduled family conferences, quarterly parent education meetings, assist students on required projects (such as science fair and reading fair), and to observe in the classroom at least once per school year. Families are also strongly encouraged to participate in any other school wide activities available.

The school needs your time, your talents, your energy and your creativity. We ask that each family commit to volunteering at least 5 hours a year at Woodlawn Preparatory School. The following is a list of volunteer opportunities:

- Reading to a class or particular student
- Assisting with activities such a cooking, art, music, crafts
- Assisting with morning and afternoon arrival/dismissal
- Assisting with children at lunch
- Attending day-time school events and field trips
- Preparing for special school events and programs
- Participating in Friday/Saturday workdays
- Participating in the annual Woodlawn Prep Rummage Sale in later October/ early November

Classroom Supplies

To offset a supply fee, Woodlawn Prep parents are given a classroom supply list for their children. Certain items, such as nap mats, are individual items, but most items will be shared by the classroom through upper elementary grades. It is expected that each child bring all of the materials on the supply list by their first day of attendance.

Homework

In order to maintain academic rigor and provide additional time out of school for students to practice new skills, teachers may ask students to take work home at times. Depending on the developmental level of the student, homework may include parents reading to their child, listening to their child read, and individual student reading for fluency or for content toward literature studies and in-class discussions. Students may also be required to study for unit tests in various subject areas, complete research projects at home, and practice math skills. Students in grades 1-8 are also required to participate in the school science fair and reading fair in alternate years. Students are encouraged to follow a work plan in order to complete their work in class, but teachers may periodically assign homework if a student is unable to complete work in class or needs additional practice with particular skills than the school day allows for.

Resource Classes

Students participate in the following Resource classes for 50 minutes each week: Art, Music, P.E., and Spanish.