

Keystone Montessori Parent-Infant Community

Welcome to School!

Welcome to Keystone Montessori School's Parent-Infant Community! We are glad you have decided to spend this important time in your child's development with us. Our goal is to provide education and support to parents of young children in a variety of ways. We hope this will be a fun and enriching experience for both you and your child!

What is our program all about?



This program is unique because it is the only program at Keystone Montessori School that parents attend along with their children. The Parent-Child program is open to all children from birth to age two, accompanied by one or both parents. For most children, this is their first experience in a Montessori setting. After a happy experience in the Parent-Child program, many of our "graduates" have moved on to our Toddler (24-36 months), Primary (3-6 years), Elementary (6-9 years), and Middle School (9-12 years) programs. The Parent-Child program is an excellent preparation for these programs.

What is the purpose of the program?

We often refer to the Parent-Infant program as a "playgroup with a purpose". It is designed to give parents a greater understanding of Montessori education and of the specific development of their own children. The program also gives parents an opportunity to ask questions and discuss parenting issues with a highly trained teacher and with fellow parents. Finally, the program allows the children to explore and experience a Montessori environment that is appropriately designed for their age.

What do the parents do?

Observation is the heart of the Montessori method of education and an important part of the Parent-Infant program. This class will give you the unique opportunity to observe your child's development without distractions. Observing your child over a period of weeks or months will give you amazing insight into her/his development, personality, and unique needs. Feel free to take notes and pictures as you observe (we recommend turning off your flash to minimize distractions). Also, our prepared environment gives you the chance to work with your child, talk with other parents, and discuss any concerns or questions you may have.



Some other helpful suggestions:

- Allow freedom of movement.
- Allow your child to separate from you and to come back to you for "refueling" as they feel the need.
- Allow your child to choose their own activities.
- Allow them to work at their own pace for as long as they need to.
- Allow your child to concentrate without interruption. Even a word, a gesture or a facial expression can distract.
- Any unnecessary help interferes with learning. Try to resist helping; you will see how capable the children truly are.
- Remember that mistakes, spills and frustrations are needed opportunities to learn.
- Relax, clear your mind, set aside outside concerns, and focus on the here and now, and the amazing child in front of you!



What does the teacher do?

The Montessori teacher spends time before each class session carefully preparing a rich learning environment for the children to explore. Most of the materials are designed in such a way that the children can teach themselves many things simply by working with the materials independently. Therefore, the teacher's role is to facilitate the children's interaction with the materials. Montessori materials are naturally enticing to children, however if a child cannot choose an activity, the teacher might suggest one. Once a child is happily working, the teacher steps back and allows her to work as long as she likes, without interruption. Like the parents, the teacher also observes the children. The teacher also helps children learn how to interact with each other, suggesting words or actions that they may try. There will be a weekly log for noting developmental and physical growth along with photographs taken each week of our child. At the end of the year, you will take home these notes and photos for a keep sake of your time together in the Parent-Infant Community.



How is the class structured?

For the first hour, the children freely explore the environment. Children are encouraged to choose any activity in the classroom they find appealing, and they may work with an activity for as long as they desire. Some children dart from one activity to another, while others may stick with one activity for a long time. Both are perfectly acceptable. If your child seems to gravitate to a certain activity for long periods of time, week after week, such as climbing stairs or washing dishes, please allow him to work as long as he likes;

this is the work that he needs to do. You will probably observe his interests and choices changing over time as he grows.

Some children feel most comfortable simply observing others for the first few weeks as they get acclimated, and this is perfectly fine, too. The children are not pressured to do anything they don't wish to do. We simply ask that they respect the materials and each other. If a child is misusing a material (such as spraying a friend with the water bottle instead of the window or a plant), the teacher or parent can gently show him the correct way to use it.

Toward the end of the first hour, the teacher will begin preparing a snack with any child who is interested in helping. When the table is set, we sit together, sing our community song, and enjoy our snack. Snack time is always a favorite activity (and educational in its own right). After we've cleaned up our snack, we might put on some music, play with musical instruments, or sing a few action songs. Soon it is time to go home.

What should I bring?

We have many activities in our environment that involve water and food, so please bring a change of clothes every week in case your child's clothes become wet or messy. Please also bring a pair of "indoor" shoes, slippers, or moccasins that your child can change into once inside, especially when the ground outside is snowy, wet, or muddy. This will help keep our floors clean for crawling babies!

Snack will be provided, however, we appreciate when families bring healthy food items to share with the class for our group snack. If you'd like to participate, we ask that you and your child bring: **a fruit or vegetable** and/or **a healthy, whole grain food**. Please prepare these items at home. Some suggested snack items include: bananas, apples, grapes, pineapple, melon, mango, blueberries, pears, peas, jicama, broccoli, carrots, or cherry tomatoes. Healthy, whole grain carbohydrate foods could be: whole wheat or Kashi crackers, bread, pita bread or wraps, hummus, bread sticks, pretzels, dips, Cheerios or other cereal.



Again, welcome! We hope you enjoy your time with us!

The Parent-Infant Program at Keystone Montessori School

The most basic aim of the Parent-Infant Program is to serve as a bridge between home and family and the school. The program addresses the needs of parents and their children from birth to age of two years, the time at which the child would likely be transitioning into a Toddler Classroom.

The program offers both parent and child an introduction to the Montessori experience. Here are a few suggestions for getting started and enjoying your time in the environment:

- * Leave your other concerns in the car as you enter class.
- * Slow your pace, adjust your focus and relax. Have fun with your child!
- * Dedicate this time to your relationship with your child and your life as a parent or caregiver.
- * Turn off your cell phone.
- * If your child walks, please allow her to walk into class, rather than carrying her in.
- * Let your child help take off his outer clothing upon arrival. Dressing and undressing are a vital part becoming an independent learner.
- * There is a basket of toileting materials in the classroom. We recommend diapers or underpants to be changed in the bathroom, with the child standing up if she is able or on a changing pad on the floor right in our environment. Once they stand securely, children can be changed standing up and can learn to help with the process. I am happy to consult and work with you regarding your child's toilet learning process.
- * Your child may work with water during class, consider bringing a change of clothes.
- * We generally included only one of each material in our environment. Young children are not always able to share. We take turns instead, when ownership is an issue. Sometime a child who has chosen a material initiates sharing or is receptive to being joined by another child. If not, we try to interest the second child in another activity until the desired activity becomes available.
- * After your child is finished with a work, even if they just walk away from the material, have them come back to put it back in its place or simply put it away for them. We always clean up after ourselves before starting a new work.
- * Sharing a snack together is an important part of our class routine and offers opportunities for practicing grace and courtesy and the art of conversation.

- * We teach best by showing and modeling rather than by correcting. Children are always watching. Allow independence. Allow freedom of movement. Allow children to make choices. Allow them to work at their own pace for as long as they are attentive and interested in their activity.
- * Share your successful parenting tips, or perhaps failures, with other parents/caregivers in the room. This is a place we can all learn from each other, try new ways in handling situations, introduce new foods or activities, and discover alternative parenting styles. Be open!

