

PARENT

HANDBOOK

Odyssey Montessori School

V.10

Welcome to Odyssey Montessori School!

This handbook will serve as your guide to our school policies and procedures. Please review it and become familiar with its contents. We appreciate your cooperation in abiding by the policies stated in this handbook.

Admission Procedures

For admission procedures, please refer to our website at www.odysseymontessori.com

Waitlist Policy

It is the policy of Odyssey Montessori School that following a tour of the school premises we will accept a completed Waitlist Form. There is no fee to be placed on the waitlist. Once we receive a completed Waitlist Form the child will be placed on the waitlist.

We accept students into the program at any time during the year, if there is space available. Priority will be given to siblings of existing students.

September admission decisions are made at the end of February after currently enrolled students are given first option to re-enroll. The Application Admission Form and Application Fee will be due when the family has received a confirmation that a spot is available.

Upon receipt of the Admission Application Form and Application Fee an Offer of Admittance letter and

registration documents will be mailed out. Registration will be confirmed upon receipt of the registration documentation together with a non-refundable Tuition Deposit by the date stated in the Offer of Admittance Letter. All payments are made in accordance with our Tuition Statement and Contract Terms.

The Waitlist Policy will be reviewed by staff, students and volunteers and implemented for compliance and contravention. This waitlist will be available in a manner that maintains privacy of the child listed on it and informs parents of their status on the waitlist. This information is included in our tour packages and can be provided via hard copy or electronically.

School Hours & Programs

The Montessori Program runs five days per week from September to June. A Summer Camp program is available as noted below.

Half day morning program	8:30 am - 11:30 am
Extended half day program	8:30 am - 1:15 pm
Full day program	8:30 am - 3:30 pm
Toddler Program	8:30 am – 3:45 pm

Before School Program

8:00 am – 8:30 am- Advance registration is necessary.

After School Program

3:30 pm to 5:30 pm- Advance registration is necessary.

The Toddler Program

Children from 18 months to 2.5 years old attend the full day program five days a week.

The Casa Program (2 1/2 – 6 years old)

Three and four year old children attend the half day or full day program five days a week. In their third year of the three year cycle children **turning five** attend a full day program. It is important that the children remain in their program for the three year cycle in order to complete and fully benefit from the **three year curriculum**. Children who do not turn three years old by December of their first year will graduate after a four year cycle.

Summer Camp Program

Half Day Camp: 8:30 am - 11:30 am

Full Day Camp: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm

After Care: 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

- Sorauren campus offers a licensed Summer Camp for the month of July.
- Christie Campus offers a licensed Summer Camp in July and two weeks in August

(Summer Camp begins on the Monday after the last day of school.)

School Closing Due to Inclement Weather

In the event of extreme weather conditions, it may be necessary to cancel school for the day or school may have to close early. The decision to cancel school will be made by 7:30 am and a message will be left on the school's answering machine. Parents are advised to listen to **680**

NEWS or watch **CP 24** for up-to-date information and announcements of school closures due to bad weather. If a decision is made *to close school early* all parents will be notified and a message will be left on the answering machine.

Arrival and Dismissal

The morning session begins promptly at 8:30 am.

Arriving at school by 8:30 am gives the children enough time to change and start the program. Arriving late is disruptive to the class routine. In order to give the children a sense of independence, parents are asked to say a brief goodbye with an assurance that you will be back for pick up. Parents must drop off and pick up the children in the waiting area. Please remain outside the cubby area. During the warmer months we may dismiss the children from the playground (with the exception of rainy days). Parents will be advised when this changes.

Dismissal times

Half day morning: **11:30 am**

Extended half day: **1:15 pm**

Casa Full day: **3:30 pm**

Toddler full day: **3:45 pm**

At dismissal time parents are asked to wait in the waiting area at the front entrance. The teacher will call the child, shake the child's hand, say goodbye and dismiss the child to the parent. Please do not call out your child's name. Your child will not be released to anyone other than the person(s) listed on the written Permission to Pick Up Forms.

These forms are available at the office. **We will ask for photo identification.**

Clothing

Children should wear manageable and practical clothing to school. To aid the child in his/her independence of going to the bathroom, we suggest clothing that the child is able to undo and fasten on his/her own. Avoid overalls, belts and shoes with laces.

Outdoor footwear should be easy for the child to put on and take off independently. All children must have a pair of soft soled indoor shoes that may be left at school for the year. These shoes should be labeled with the child's name.

All children require at least one change of clothing (seasonally appropriate) that has been labeled with the child's name. This consists of socks, underwear, season appropriate pants and shirt. These items are to be placed in a small bag provided by the school.

Children play outdoors throughout the school year and should be dressed appropriately for the weather. In summer children must have a hat and sunscreen at school. Please label all belongings.

Please **do not allow** your child to bring toys to school. If a child brings a toy to school it will be kept in the office.

Parent Participation

At Odyssey Montessori School we believe that parents and teachers need to support each other, in the distinct and

essential role that each has in providing experiences and opportunities from which the child can learn.

To fully support your child's education and foster this relationship between child, family and school we will provide parents with opportunities for observations, parent education as well as participation in organized social gatherings.

Parent Education Evenings are planned throughout the year. These are wonderful opportunities to learn more about the developmental needs of the child as well as the Montessori philosophy. Questions will be answered and discussion is encouraged. Parents are welcome to **observe** in their child's casa. This can be arranged with the school throughout the school year.

Parent- Teacher interviews are held twice a year. Parents are always welcome to call the school with any questions or concerns they may have.

Parent - Teacher Communication

Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns. You are always welcome to speak to the Principal if at any time your concerns have not been addressed appropriately. You may either

- leave a note with a brief message on your child's casa's noticeboard at the entrance of the school
- call and leave a message for the teacher to call you back
- email the teacher directly

Sharing talents & Parent Month

The month of April is the month that we encourage parents and grandparents to sign up to come to school to share their talents!

If a parent has a particular interest or talent- dancing, singing, playing an instrument, art, is a policeman-woman, nurse, dentist etc., please let us know and we can arrange for you to come and share this with all of us at school any time during the year.

Absences – Illness – Communicable Diseases

Absence

Please notify the school if your child is to be absent from school. If the absence is due to illness, please be specific about the nature of the illness. This allows the school to track the incidences of illness in the school.

Birthdays

Children enjoy sharing a special snack with their friends on their birthday. You are welcome to send in a special birthday snack, such as muffins, cookies, fruit or vegetables. **NO peanut butter or nut products, Odyssey Montessori School is a nut free environment.**

You may also bring photos of your child. (one photo, for each year - new born, one year old, two years old etc.) For further information please speak to the directress of the class. Please post birthday invitations on the Birthday Invitation Board at the entrance.

Walks and Field Trips

We may leave the school for occasional walks in the neighborhood. We will inform parents regarding field trips and will require a trip authorization form to be filled out for the child to participate.

Safety

When a child receives minor injuries at school, an accident report is filled out and a copy is given to the parent to sign.

- if it is a head injury, the parent is always contacted, even if the injury is deemed a minor one
- if the school feels the injury is serious enough to have the child seen by a doctor, the parent is notified immediately
- if the injury requires emergency treatment, 911 is called and the parent is contacted immediately

Approaches to discipline: There are certain guidelines, outlined in the Behaviour Management Policies in CCEYA (Child Care Early Years Act) that are followed in dealing with problems that may arise in the classroom. It is the school policy to have **positive approaches** to misbehaviour.

No licensee shall permit the following Prohibited Practices with respect to a child receiving child care at a child care centre it operates or at a premises where it oversees the provision of child care,

- (a) corporal punishment of the child;
- (b) physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child

from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;

(c) locking the exits of the child care centre or home child care premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;

(d) use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;

(e) depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding; or

(f) inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Student Withdrawal

Our school environment should always be a positive one for all our students. In situations where a student repeatedly rejects the guidelines of the school, is having difficulty adjusting to the environment or is disturbing the peace of other classmates, the parent may be asked to withdraw the child. We do our best to work with parents to find the best way to help the child through a difficult time however if this fails to be effective a written notice will be given.

There are **no refunds or deductions in fees** for days the school is closed, holidays, sick days or mid month withdrawal. Post-dated cheques will be returned with the **exception** of the two month deposit.

Snack

There will be a nutritious morning snack provided for the children.

There will also be a snack provided for children in the after school program.

Lunch

We provide a catered lunch for the children. For more information about the catered lunch please call the office at (416) 535- 9402.

Illness

The parents of the children who have a communicable disease or who display signs of fever, are vomiting, have diarrhea, severe cough, skin rash will be notified and asked pick up their child from the school. Children must be free of all symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school.

Administration of Medicine

The staff at Odyssey Montessori School will only administer medication that has been prescribed by a physician.

Non-prescribed medication

Non-prescribed medication will be given to the child only if accompanied by a doctor's note. A Medicine

Administration form must be filled out, specifying the amount of medication to be administered with a schedule that sets out the time of administration.

Prescribed Medication

If you require the administration of any medication prescribed by a doctor, a Medicine Administration form is to be filled out and the medicine bottle is to be labeled with your child's name and dosage information.

All medication must be in its original container, clearly labeled with the child's name, name of medication, dosage and the instructions for storage and administration of medication. All medication is to be given to the Classroom Directress for proper storage away from children. It is the parent's responsibility to pick up the medication at the end of the day by asking the Classroom Directress to retrieve it from the storage container.

All parents **must** adhere to these policies and **must sign a Medical Authorization Form** before the staff will be allowed to administer any medication to a child.

Any staff member, student or volunteer bringing any medication into the school must lock the medication in the designated area.

Anaphylactic Policy and Medical Needs Policy

It is the policy at Odyssey Montessori School to identify and respond to any serious pre-existing medical conditions of students in our care, including Anaphylaxis, through the development of an Emergency Plan. The Emergency Plan must include:

- a photo of the child
- a description of the allergy or medical condition
- monitoring and avoidance strategies
- signs and symptoms of a reaction or illness
- procedure to follow in the event of a reaction or illness
- permission to administer medication as outlined

- a description and instructions for any medical devices that may be required
- any additional procedure to be followed if the child with a medical condition is part of an evacuation or participating in an off-site field trip
- emergency contact information

Staff must be provided with training from the parents or physician of the child on the procedures to be followed in an emergency with a serious illness or anaphylactic reaction.

The school must be notified if the child outgrows an allergy, requires medication, different treatment, a change in the emergency contacts or any other change to the Emergency Plan

Child Care Supervision for Volunteers and Students

It is a policy at Odyssey Montessori School that:

- direct unsupervised access is not permitted for persons who are not employees of Odyssey Montessori School
- placement student may not be counted in staffing ratio
- volunteers may not be counted in staffing ratios

Odyssey Montessori School Program Statement

Odyssey Montessori School's interpretation of Montessori pedagogy and programming is consistent with the Minister of Education's Policy Statement set out in "*How Does Learning Happen?*" (HDLH). The activities a child engages in according to the HDLH are described as 'play' whereas

in the Montessori pedagogy they are described as 'work' but the activities, as experienced by a child, are one and the same.

This program statement will be reviewed by and discussed with all staff, students and volunteers annually. It will be reviewed again if and when amendments are made.

Odyssey Montessori School believes that all children are competent, capable, curious and full of potential. This program statement describes our approach at Odyssey Montessori School to achieve goals that allow each child to flourish and reach their full potential. This statement is inherent in Montessori and is applied by observing and following the individual needs and interests of each child.

We aim to promote the health, safety, well-being and nutrition of the children in our care by diligently adhering to the requirements of ONTARIO REGULATION 137/15. This includes maintaining supervision and adult-child ratios, and having policies and procedures in place that support the safety and well-being of the children in our care. We ensure that snacks and meals as provided by RFRK (Real Food for Real Kids), our catering company, meet the Canada food guide requirements, introduce flavours from different parts of the world and offer alternatives for children with allergies and dietary restrictions. Staff are trained to handle situations to ensure they all food is prepared to maintain the safety and well-being of the children.

Our environment strives to support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, and staff. This is

achieved by maintaining clear and open communication and addressing children, parents and staff in a welcoming and positive manner. This is observed and adhered to in our 'Values' and 'Code of Conduct.' Other areas this communicated is in our staff policies, staff handbook, parent handbook and calendar, applying this goal to all members of the Odyssey community (staff, student teachers, parents, volunteers, observers and visitors). We acknowledge and approach situations that may arise in a positive way and work together with parents and staff to find solutions.

At Odyssey, we interact and communicate in a respectful and positive manner. Every child is treated equally, with respect and understanding. The development of self-regulation and independence are key components of the Montessori curriculum. The child's ability to self-regulate is supported by having mixed-age Montessori communities where children remain with the same adults for three years. This provides opportunities for mentorship and allows children to interact with older and younger children and with adults. Intrinsic awards, choosing work independently, the ability for children to choose work independently. This code of Respectful Conduct is applied consistently throughout the school to all members of the Odyssey community.

Our fully-equipped Montessori environments allow us to foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry. The activities available in our environment accommodate the full range of the three ages in each room (2 ½- 6 years old). There are a wide range of activities that assist children to become independent, to be able to assist others in care of

the self, care of others (Grace and Courtesy), care of the environment; activities that explore and refine all the senses and focus on discovery of sequencing and order. There are also language activities to increase vocabulary, encourage discussion, explore sounds, and begin to develop the process of writing and reading. Math activities to develop number sense, numeracy, understanding of large quantities, the mathematical operations, geometry, and basic algebra concepts. There are various activities to introduce all the wonderful things in our world in addition to activities for cutting, colouring, painting, exploring colour, shape and texture, pasting, etc. Children understand where things belong and they are able to independently choose activities and when finished, return things where they belong independently and/or with their friends.

We provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences. The Montessori program is designed so that teachers are not required to be by the side of each child in order for them to be independent with the many activities on the shelves. Each child is observed for readiness and interests and will be provided with lessons with Montessori materials that will assist them with their development. Montessori materials are introduced to a child by an adult or by another child. Many of these materials and lessons have a myriad of extensions so that children are increasingly more challenged with the same or similar activities for an extended period in the program. There are activities for example like washing the table that can be done in a developmentally appropriate, yet challenging way for the two year old right up to the five year old. These activities alone, develop concentration, independence, confidence, ability to follow a detailed sequence of

instructions. Through observation, the adult is able to see what support each child might need, being sensitive to allow children to use their own initiative. This process often results in children being deeply engaged and peaceful in what they are doing. Adults continuously try to find precise moments to introduce new exercises, ensuring enough time is allotted for the child to master these activities but to also gently challenge them.

We plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development is supported by using Montessori materials. The Montessori curriculum is used internationally and through research has been proven to be effective with children from all socio-economic and cultural groups.

We incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day according to the requirements set out in the CCEYA (Child Care and Early Years Education Act 2010) with consideration to by allowing the children to manage a great deal of their day. Children freely move about the class carrying things, building, creating, sitting quietly at a table or at a mat on the floor moving intricate pieces. Children choose to have snack or a drink when they are hungry or thirsty; they do not need to wait for the whole group. Our large, well equipped, outdoor playground that children access in groups allows ample opportunity for gross motor activity with a variety of choices, activities and opportunities for social interaction.

At Odyssey Montessori, we have an open and transparent communication system between our school and our

families. There are many opportunities available for communication and involvement with parents, keeping them informed and updated about our program. This includes inviting parents to come in for observations of their children, open houses, parent-education evenings, monthly newsletters and blogs, sending emails with pictures and notes of the children's day. We can be reached via phone or email; these are the main outlets teachers use to communicate with parents. We make the effort and time to chat briefly during arrival and dismissal times. We believe that our school is an extension of the home. In the beginning of the school year each class has a morning breakfast where parents can meet other parents, as well as the above methods that allow them to see their child at work.

We welcome local community partners and specialists to work with us and support the children, families and staff. Community partners from The City of Toronto and Community Living Toronto, and find spaces in our school for them to work with our children and meet with the parents and teachers as necessary. We maintain positive relationships with members of the community and extend the children's relationship with the community by taking neighbourhood walks, going to parks and connecting with others.

We support our staff and others who interact with the children in relation to continuous professional learning through workshops outside of the school. At the end of August, when we prepare for the coming school year, all staff review and complete all necessary documentation required by CCEYA. Staff are encouraged to set goals for

themselves and through discussions we plan for how to support them in the achievement of those goals. We have Professional Development days set aside each year to meet as a whole staff and in smaller groups to review our work and plan for improvements. We meet monthly to discuss ongoing issues or topics of particular interest. Staff members are given time during the year to spend time observing in other classrooms and in other schools in order to gain insight and new ideas that can enhance the classroom and our school as a whole. In addition, they are encouraged to seek out professional development opportunities to further enhance their knowledge and skills.

We document and review the impact of the above strategies on the children and their families through observation, conversation, meetings, surveys, etc. Staff are expected to read school policies and program statement thoroughly and are encouraged to ask questions and make suggestions on how we can provide an optimal, supportive environment for the children in our care.

We welcome you to Odyssey Montessori School.

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