

What Your Child's Teachers Would Like You to Know

By P. Donohue Shortridge

Dear Parents,

There is so much for you to think about when raising young children. We honor you as your child's first and best teachers, and our goal as your child's Montessori teachers is to collaborate with you. In service of that collaboration, we'd like to share with you some suggestions that will enrich your child's Montessori experience:

- When we ask you to arrive on time, it is to enhance your child's start to the school day. When your child arrives at the same time as the other children, he observes the morning routine, and thus naturally joins in, doing what comes next—greeting teachers and each other, putting belongings away, and entering the classroom with peers. This is a joyful time for your child. Arriving late means he misses this start to the day and must join the class already in progress. While this may be no big deal to adults, for many children it can be disorienting.
- On the journey to and from school, we urge you to create the space for your child to engage with you, rather than with an electronic device. We also ask you to refrain from being on your own cell phone on the way to and from school. When you are using your phone in your child's presence, you have left your child. You may be in the same space, but you are not present. The same is true if you are on the phone during the moment of separation at the school door. You have already left, and your child feels it. Please save your calls and texts until after your child has separated from you. To learn how to leave (and to return to) loved ones is an important skill. Transitions can be challenging for both you and your child, but, nevertheless, separation is a significant ritual that happens best in the moment, in real time, rather than slipping gradually away through use of electronic devices.
- One of the most important ways you can help your child gain confidence is by allowing him or her to take increasing self-responsibility. Allow her to walk into the school, rather than be carried by you. This says to her, "I see you as an independent person, rather than as an extension of me," and fosters her ownership of her own body. Your child can also take responsibility for carrying her jacket, backpack, lunch box, and any other belongings. When you allow her to walk into school, carrying her own possessions, you foster her development of responsibility as a natural part of learning how to be independent.
- At school, we seek to limit the number of parent events so as not to overwhelm your schedule. At the same time, we urge you to attend our



parent education events. We create them especially for you. Our goal is to enhance our partnership with you by spending time together with you as adults, without children present. We offer topics that we think will be useful to you as parents and will further your understanding of Montessori. It's also a time for you to socialize with other parents who are doing exactly what you are doing—raising children in today's modern culture. There is much to learn from each other. Your questions and concerns are important, relevant, and useful for other parents as well.

And finally, please know that we want to see you, hear from you, and welcome you to be a part of our school. When your child sees you are happy to be here, he or she gets the message that this is a great place to spend the day!

Thank you for your partnership,
Your Child's Montessori Teachers

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