

Montessori School of Yakima

A Blueprint of our Fundamental Values and Beliefs

Our Mission

Our mission is to create a purposeful, peaceful and enriching environment, based on the philosophy and principles of Dr. Maria Montessori. Within this environment, we will nurture the children of our community to become competent, compassionate and confident people who respect and contribute to the world in which they live.

Our underlying values

- Fostering a joy of learning within our students.
- Developing a strongly held set of universal values, which include self-respect, respect for others, honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy, compassion, kindness, peacefulness, a sense of concern for others, tolerance, acceptance, warmth, and a love of community.
- Providing each child with an awareness of the world around them and their place within it.
- Developing a lifelong commitment to give something back through service to others.
- Empowering students to learn how to make responsible choices for themselves, to recognize that they are assuming increasing control over their lives, and to discover how to make a difference in the world.

I. Educational Program

- a. The Fundamental Nature of MSY is to provide a quality education for children utilizing the Montessori approach as the framework for our educational program. Our curriculum is designed to prepare students for life-long learning.
 - i. MSY teaches children a respect for the natural environment and responsible stewardship of our resources.
 - ii. MSY encourages parents to actively support their child's education and development.
 - iii. MSY strives to instill character and values within each student.
 - iv. MSY welcomes all families within the community.
 - v. MSY is a close-knit community of students, staff, parents, and friends of the school.
- b. MSY is based on the fundamental philosophy and principles of Dr. Maria Montessori.
 - i. In addition to the Montessori philosophy and materials, we use elements of other compatible curriculum where appropriate.
 - ii. MSY affirms that education begins at birth and continues throughout life.
 - iii. MSY provides a nurturing environment that allows children to gain wisdom and knowledge through their learning and experiences.

- Students learn at their own pace, thereby gaining self-esteem in their accomplishments.
- iv. MSY encourages its students to be open-minded and compassionate, to gain a sense of themselves and others, and to understand and appreciate human diversity.
 - v. MSY fosters independence within the classroom community by encouraging participation in classroom management, care of the environment and decision-making. We want each student to understand that the good of the individual and that of the classroom community are interconnected.
 - vi. MSY encourages students to learn from their experience; both success and failure as non-threatening feedback on their progress and personal growth.
 - vii. MSY nurtures the whole child, promoting his or her intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical development.
 - viii. MSY's educational approach is based on the stages of human development. Therefore, our curriculum follows a three-year cycle (ages 0-3, 3-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-15, 15-18).
 - ix. MSY uses an individualized approach to learning, while still holding expectations that students meet or exceed state standards.
 - x. MSY promotes active, hands-on learning through discovery.
 - xi. MSY provides an educational environment that encourages internal motivation, self-evaluation, and reflection at all levels of development.
 - xii. MSY aids students in learning by starting with the "big picture" and working toward an increasing level of detail, and from concrete to abstract levels of experience. This creates a spiraling curriculum in which skills and concepts are presented and reintroduced at increasing levels of complexity and abstraction over time.
 - xiii. MSY interprets the general principle of Montessori education, "follow the child," to refer to the importance of allowing students to pursue areas of spontaneous interest whenever possible. However, if a child needs more direction at certain times or is not internally motivated in a given area, we feel it is our responsibility to acknowledge their personal preference while still requiring that the necessary work be completed.
 - xiv. MSY strives for a balance between freedom, order and responsibility in our educational program.
 - xv. MSY nurtures curiosity, creativity and critical thinking:
 1. Students are encouraged to think creatively and critically in their writing, problem solving and research.
 2. As appropriate for each age group, MSY encourages thoughtful discourse about major social, political, economic, environmental and ethical issues of our day. After having carefully considered all sides, students are encouraged to take a responsible stand for themselves and explore ways of making a positive personal contribution to society.

3. MSY encourages the exchange of ideas and discourse by teaching and modeling active listening, negotiation and compromise and the confidence to respectfully express one's point of view.
- c. MSY embraces a global perspective as a philosophy for building a diverse community grounded in an understanding and acceptance of all peoples.
 - i. MSY celebrates diversity in our community and acknowledges the unique contributions of all.
 - ii. MSY seeks to develop a global perspective and international understanding, weaving international education through our curriculum at every age level:
 1. through exposure to modern foreign languages;
 2. through the study of physical, cultural, and economic geography;
 3. through encouraging families to share their cultural traditions, travel experiences and traditional festivals.
- d. An excellent Montessori education helps prepare students for university and for life-long learning.
 - i. At MSY we want our students to be well trained in the basic academic disciplines, to fulfill their creative potential, and to gain personal satisfaction in their physical, emotional, social and intellectual progress.
 - ii. In all cases MSY sets high expectations in academic standards, consistently stressing the importance of careful work, striving for excellence, and satisfaction in work done well for its own sake.
 - iii. Homework is not an integral part of the Montessori curriculum and will not be regularly assigned. Quality, extended work periods in the classroom provide children with the opportunity to complete their work during school hours.
 - iv. MSY believes that it is neither necessary nor appropriate to use academic pressure and scholastic competition among students as motivation. We cultivate the ability to accept success with grace, and failure or loss with dignity, and resolve to build on the experience. We ensure the right to choose whether or not to participate in competitive activities, and we stress the principles of good sportsmanship.
 - v. MSY designs our educational program to maximize each student's academic and personal success.
 1. Academic success: MSY encourages skills that support independent and successful learning, critical thinking, cooperative projects, reflective reading, problem solving, library research, use of technology, techniques for effective study, test-taking strategies, and techniques for focusing attention.
 2. Personal success: MSY considers it equally important that our students be successful human beings who can establish healthy relationships and achieve happiness in their personal lives. We teach our students to pay attention to and respect feelings, both their own and those of others. We help them to learn to solve conflicts effectively and fairly, and to express their feelings in a healthy manner.

3. Discipline: MSY follows the Montessori Philosophy in its approach to discipline. Our goal is to assist children in arriving at inner discipline through concentrated work. In all areas the child is assisted in developing the skills necessary to control their own actions to develop self-discipline. Natural or logical consequences are used as a means of helping the child to develop inner limits.
 4. Behavior: MSY is normally successful with a wide range of students; however, we may not be right for every child. When, despite our best efforts to work with the child to help him/her meet appropriate behavioral expectations, we counsel the family to seek out another school setting in which the child can experience success.
 5. Exceptionalities: To the extent that individual exceptionalities may occur, MSY may recommend families seek outside professional evaluation. MSY will strive to work with families and outside sources to develop a program that meets the needs of the child within the Montessori setting, if possible.
- vi. MSY offers a comprehensive curriculum appropriate to each child's level of development:
1. **Practical Life skills:** To facilitate and encourage a sense of independence, we deliberately teach a wide range of practical life skills appropriate to each child's level of development. We regard this as a vital element affecting the design of our entire curriculum. Practical life skills may include these and other skills, as appropriate and relevant to the principles of Montessori:
 - a. **Eye-hand coordination:** and the use of simple tools.
 - b. **Grace and courtesy:** appropriate ways to handle situations kindly.
 - c. **Practical economics:** the value and use of money, including how to earn and manage spending money.
 - d. **Transportation:** As appropriate at each age level in MSY, the safe use of alternate means of transportation other than a parent's car, such as hiking and bicycling, public transportation, and (if we ever extend to the secondary level) driver's education.
 - e. **Communication:** the appropriate use of the technology of personal and mass communication, from writing letters to using a telephone, using a computer, preparing a newsletter, speaking before an audience and designing audiovisual presentations.
 - f. **Care of ones Environment:** how to clean and set tables, do dishes, cook, sew, iron, infant and child care and laundry.
 - g. **Health and Safety:** the development of sound habits of safety, nutrition and hygiene, along with the acquisition of first-aid skills and as developmentally appropriate, CPR.
 2. **Sensory Training:** MSY trains the children to be increasingly aware of the world around them through the use of their senses.
 3. **Science:** MSY teaches scientific facts, as well as the process, history, and true nature of science, which includes studying the

world through the scientific method. Our curriculum will be integrated, incorporating topics from botany, zoology, physical science, machines and technology, astronomy, geology, ecology, earth science, weather, and the medical sciences.

4. **Foreign Language:** MSY believes the acquisition of foreign language skills should become an important part of our curriculum.
5. **Mathematics:** Our approach will be Unified Math: integrating topics in arithmetic, geometry, pre-algebra, statistics, logic, algebra, trigonometry, and calculus as the child is ready. We help students grasp the underlying concepts of math through the use of concrete apparatus and through application of mathematics to real world tasks.
6. **Economics:** Our goal is for our students to both understand the principles of economic freedom and to feel comfortable with financial and business matters. We encourage them to develop both an entrepreneurial and philanthropic spirit.
7. **Geography:** MSY will teach geography (physical, cultural, political and economic).
8. **History:** MSY develops a strong historical perspective through the study of prehistory and history. Students will follow an anthropological approach to study the fundamental needs of humankind and its cultures, lifestyles, and technology.
9. **Anthropology and Myth:** MSY teaches students the basic elements of anthropology, addressing the question of what makes us human, the nature of culture, and how cultures have attempted to explain or illuminate the great questions of life through story, myth, and cultural archetypes.
10. **Major World Religions:** MSY believes that our students should be familiar with the traditions and basic beliefs of the world's major religions. While we do not teach religion, nor advocate any particular belief system, we encourage students to explore their questions and the spiritual side of their lives.
11. **Architecture:** MSY believes that our students should develop an appreciation for the timeless beauty of well-designed spaces, understand the patterns of architecture found around us, and learn how structures are designed and built.
12. **Civics and Law:** Students at MSY will explore how government works at the local, state, and federal levels. Beginning in elementary, students will study and discuss current events and issues.
13. **Language Arts and Literature:** MSY's goal is to develop students who read and write proficiently. Language Arts will include conversational skills, public speaking, vocabulary, composition, grammar and the study of various types of literature.
14. **Fine and Performing Arts:** MSY believes appreciation of and participation in the fine and performing arts, including music and drama, should be an important part of our curriculum.

15. **Research Skills:** Students at MSY will conduct research using the library, internet, and other resources available to them.
16. **Physical Education, Health, and Athletics:** Students will participate in physical, health, and nutritional education. MSY wants our students to understand, appreciate, and adopt a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise, proper diet, intelligent choices regarding personal health, and stress reduction.
17. **Peace Education:** MSY's peace curriculum teaches human relations and conflict resolution skills, nonviolence, cooperative teamwork skills, and communication skills.
18. **Community Service:** Each year the students at MSY participate in three areas of community service: the school, the local community, and the wider world.
19. **Technology and Computers:** the safe use of technology, such as more complex tools, telephones, computers, classroom audio-visual equipment, and household appliances. We use the computer as a fundamental tool for learning, not only as an element of contemporary practical life, but also as an aid in the development of logical planning and problem solving.

II. **Faculty:** MSY strives to attract and retain qualified individuals who support the goals of our program and enhance student learning.

- a. MSY carefully identifies and specifies the duties and responsibilities of each position in the school.
- b. MSY carefully identifies the skills and knowledge, experience, educational philosophy, core values, and interpersonal skills needed to be successful in each position at MSY.
- c. MSY takes great care in our hiring process to find new members of our faculty and staff who bring the right mix of skills, knowledge, experience, values, and personality to succeed at MSY.
- d. MSY will clearly communicate to all members of the faculty and staff our expectations, personnel policies, and benefits and professional development opportunities that may be applicable to their positions.
- e. In evaluating the school's programs and performance of each member of the faculty and staff we will be as objective and positive as possible. MSY encourages peer and self-evaluation and continuous professional growth.
- f. MSY consciously follows fair and equal employment practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, and compensating both teaching and non-teaching staff members. We endeavor to employ persons solely on the basis of the factors necessary in the performance of the job and the operation of MSY without discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, race, national origin, gender, and any other factor on which discrimination is prohibited by the laws of the jurisdiction within which MSY is located.
- g. No official of will seek to induce a teacher who is under contract at another school to break that contract. (There is nothing deemed improper if a member of the teaching or administrative staff of one school independently approaches another school about possible employment.)

- h. MSY will not knowingly offer employment to a member of the faculty or staff of another school without communicating with the Head of the school, with the applicant's consent, at which he or she is presently employed or committed for the upcoming school year to request a frank evaluation of a candidate's qualifications. This information will be considered absolutely confidential.
- i. MSY will take all reasonable and lawful precautions to maintain the confidentiality of records and information concerning teachers and other staff members who are applying for employment at another school, in accordance with the rights of the individual.
- j. Any materials brought to school by a member of our faculty and staff, purchased with his or her own funds, shall remain his or her property.
- k. It is mutually understood that any teacher-made educational materials produced by a member of the faculty and staff during the term of this Agreement using school materials and supplies shall be considered the property of the school. However, faculty and staff members may use school materials to make a duplicate set of these materials for their own professional library.
- l. Should a faculty member develop any new curricula, teaching techniques, teaching aids, or any other educational materials during the course of his or her employment with the School, he or she grants to the School a perpetual license to utilize said materials or ideas in its educational programs with both children and teacher training.
- m. Any teaching aids, materials, or curricula developed by the School, as well as any mailing lists of the School's students and families, represent the proprietary property of the School. No one will be authorized to sell, transfer, assign, or disseminate said materials to a third person or a competitor of the School without first obtaining the Head of School's written approval.

III. Facilities

- a. We will deliberately seek to create and maintain a campus of timeless beauty that communicates to our students that the buildings and grounds are expressions of our love and commitment to their education and success.
- b. Whatever the size of our enrollment, or the age levels encompassed in our programs, our buildings and grounds will support the implementation of our educational program and institutional mission as ideally as possible.
- c. Buildings will be carefully considered in terms of need, ideal space and configuration, and will follow the design concept, with a focus on environmental awareness.
- d. As a Montessori school, a priority for us will be to have a campus large enough to include areas set aside for natural habitat, as well as areas set aside for programs in horticultural education and animal care.
- e. The school will endeavor to keep the buildings and grounds free from toxic substances and environmental irritants.
- f. The school will consciously follow safety procedures designed to protect students and staff.

- g. Classroom materials will be kept up to date and replaced often enough to maintain the Montessori environment.

IV. Finances

- a. MSY honors its financial commitments to parents, staff, vendors, and others.
- b. We will operate on a balanced budget.
- c. Tuition will be set on the basis of what it costs to fulfill our mission and provide a quality Montessori education.
- d. MSY will set aside a portion of our income every year to support the school's tuition assistance program and reduced tuition for staff dependents.
- e. MSY will communicate accurate information about the financial state of the school in an annual report to the community and more often as needed.
- f. We will endeavor to operate without depending on income from fundraising projects, which will be used to enhance programs and facilities.
- g. We expect all of our families to honor their financial obligations to the school in a timely and responsible manner, per our tuition agreement.

V. Recruitment, admissions, and enrollment

- a. Admissions: Our primary goal in the recruitment and admissions process is to respectfully help each family determine whether MSY is a good fit with their values and goals, and the school setting that will work best for their individual child.
 - i. When we admit a new student, we are not simply bringing him or her into the school community. We are bringing the child, his parents, siblings, and extended family into the MSY community.
 - ii. In making admissions decisions, we will weigh many factors, placing the greatest emphasis on whether the parents are deeply committed to sending their children to MSY, and whether their values and goals for their children's education are a close match with those of MSY.
 - iii. In making admissions decisions, we will normally give strong preference to families who we believe are committed to keeping their children in the school through the elementary years. A Montessori student, who has assimilated into the school, can never be replaced.
 - iv. Hopefully the children who we admit in the early years will graduate from MSY. Ideally it will be so much a part of each family's life that eventually the children of our graduates will attend MSY as well. We want to be a family tradition.
 - v. We will welcome prospective parents and make it easy for them to learn about MSY and the Montessori philosophy.
 - vi. We will arrange frequent and convenient times when prospective parents can observe in our classrooms.
 - vii. We will not try to convince prospective parents that MSY is right for them and for their child. Instead we will tell the truth, help them to grasp the true nature of the school and what it has to offer, and allow them to weigh all the factors as they consider whether MSY is indeed a good fit for them and their child.

- viii. We will make a list of the names and home phone numbers of Ambassador Parents available to prospective parents who would like to speak with another family.
- ix. We will consider applications for admission on a case-by-case open admission basis. We will do our best once an inquiry has been received to arrange for the parents to observe and tour MSY. We will gather all of the information needed to evaluate the application, and schedule all meetings and interviews within a reasonable timeframe. We will endeavor to make and communicate all admissions decisions to the families as quickly as possible. Following acceptance, and prior to entrance, we will schedule each student's visit and evaluation.
- x. Non-discrimination: MSY does not discriminate in matters of admission on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or creed. We consciously teach children to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the global community. We regard a mix of backgrounds and abilities as a positive and important element in our community.
- xi. Truth in Advertising: We pledge to represent MSY truthfully and accurately to the general public and internally to our parent community.
- xii. Negative Public Relations: MSY further pledges to respect the community of Montessori schools. We will not engage in negative public relations nor make any negative statements about another Montessori school.
- xiii. We will promptly consult with parents should it ever become clear that a student is not benefiting from the school's program, or if the school is not the best program to meet his/her needs.
- xiv. MSY recognizes each family's right to visit and consider other schools and to hold preliminary discussions regarding admission without feeling compelled to notify the school, which their children presently attend.
- xv. While we welcome inquiries and interest in MSY, we will never knowingly attempt to recruit a student who is presently enrolled in or committed to attend another Montessori program.
- xvi. Before filing an application for admission, we ask that each family advise their child's present school and authorize in writing the release to us of their child's academic records and student recommendations upon our request.

VI. School Community

- a. We offer opportunities for parent education.
- b. We treat all students, families, teachers, and staff members with kindness, warmth, and respect.
- c. We consciously work to build a constructive partnership between the family and school, as early as possible, in support of each child's educational development.
- d. Within reasonable guidelines established to ensure the integrity of our educational program and the privacy of other students' records, parents are welcome to visit the school to observe their child in class or to review his/her academic progress.

- e. We consider input from all of our community members in our decision-making processes.
- f. We believe in holding monthly class and community meetings to encourage an open exchange of ideas and information.
- g. We encourage parents to participate in programs that can help them refine parenting strategies, to facilitate the development of independence, responsibility, self-confidence and self-respect in their sons and daughters and in themselves. We are committed to find ways to provide support for families.
- h. We understand the needs of families new to the MSY community and the necessity of a program to match new families with ones experienced in the community to provide support and information.

VII. **Administration**

- a. Our administration, consisting of Head of School and supporting staff, is focused on providing educational leadership, business administration, and community relations.
- b. The primary role of the Head of School is to articulate the core values and vision, provide academic leadership, take leadership in the admissions and recruitment process, build community and reduce attrition among students and families, recruit and coach faculty members and staff, oversee the financial health of the school, serve as the school's primary spokesperson to the larger community, and lead the process of internal self-evaluation and long-term planning in partnership with the board.
 - i. Educational Leadership of Head of School.
 - ii. Business Administration of Head of School.
 - iii. Community Relations of Head of School.
 - iv. In relationship to the board, the Head of School carries out the broad educational policies established by the Board and acts within the limits of the financial policy set by the board.
 - v. Within these basic guidelines the Head of School determines the methods for carrying out Board policies, creates operational policy, oversees the business operation, develops and evaluates student programs and services, provides administrative and professional leadership for faculty and staff, orchestrates external relations, and has responsibility for the day-to-day operation.
- c. The Administration will ensure that excellence and consistency with our values and vision permeate the school from class to class, from level to level, and from one year to the next.
- d. The Administration will support the faculty and attempt to provide similar support and counsel to the school's families. What is best for each individual child, and what is consistent with the core values of the school, are the ultimate factors by which decisions will be made.
- e. When conflicts arise within the school, every attempt will be made to find a resolution that is most consistent with the school's policies and fundamental values.

- f. The administration of the school will ensure a smooth and timely flow of communication about important dates and information to parents, students, and staff.
- g. The administration will collaborate with board members, faculty, staff and parents, inviting their input and participation when appropriate in important questions facing the school.

VIII. Governance

- a. The Board of Directors shall consider, in all matters, the overall best interests of the school over their own interests, or over those of any constituent group within the school community.
- b. MSY's mission, institutional identity, and core values and beliefs are set down in writing in a working document called the "Blueprint."
 - i. Before voting on any motion made before the Board, the Board of Directors will first consult the Blueprint to identify the underlying values and beliefs that would support whatever decision is made on the issue before the Board.
 - ii. If the Blueprint does not address the issue, or if the Board concludes that the Blueprint needs to be amended to more completely address the school's underlying values and beliefs, it will propose an amendment to the MSY community before voting on the motion.
 - iii. The minutes of the Board meetings will reflect the motions passed and the text of the underlying elements of the Blueprint.
- c. Except when confidential matters are being considered, board meetings are open.
- d. Except for confidential issues, the major actions of the board will be communicated to the school community.
- e. Parents or staff members may request the opportunity to address the board.
- f. New board members will receive a copy of the Blueprint and by-laws. If board members are not parents at the school, they will be encouraged to observe in the classroom to gain a better understanding of the Montessori philosophy.
- g. MSY will seek and maintain Montessori accreditation from a Montessori governing body. An accreditation will provide a distinction for MSY from other schools operating under the Montessori name.

IX. Fundraising

- a. MSY families are strongly encouraged to participate in our select fundraising opportunities throughout the year.
- b. Donations of funds, tangible goods, services, or real property are deeply appreciated. However, the school has the right to refuse any gift that would require it to violate any of its core beliefs or policies.
- c. Donations may be earmarked, but are subject to acceptance by the Board of Directors.
- d. Only the Board of Directors can accept a gift of real property or tangible goods on behalf of the school that would potentially require the expenditure of funds to repair or maintain.
- e. The Board of Directors will support the overall fundraising efforts of the school.

X. **Supporting Activities**

- a. Vehicles will be used to support cultural, educational and physical education opportunities.
- b. MSY shall maintain any school vehicles used for transportation including adequate insurance coverage. Means of communication shall be provided for supervising staff during off site activities.

XI. **Supporting Programs (summer programs, teacher training centers, parenting centers, etc.)**

- a. Supporting programs which are in accordance with the Montessori philosophy will be considered as interest and needs arise.