



Brookside Montessori School

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Owner and Directress

Brookside Montessori School Handbook

Current as of June, 2025

Table of Contents	
Introduction..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Background on the Montessori Method ◦ Brookside Montessori School History 	3
Program Information..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Preschool Program ◦ Full-Day Kindergarten Program 	6
Brookside Montessori School Staff	7
General Information..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Daily Schedule ◦ Teacher-In-Service Days ◦ Monthly Themes ◦ Newsletters 	8
Parent Information..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hours of Operation ◦ Tuition Payments ◦ Late Fees ◦ Parking ◦ "Open Door" Policy ◦ Parent Involvement ◦ Observations / Conferences ◦ Parent Correspondence ◦ Book Orders ◦ Sign-Up Sheets ◦ Holiday Celebrations ◦ Fund Raising ◦ School Closings ◦ Registration Time ◦ Health and Medical Policy ◦ Discipline Policy 	9
Student Information..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "Cubbies" ◦ Activity Books ◦ Show-and-Tell ◦ Snacks ◦ Clothing ◦ School T-Shirts ◦ Student Correspondence ◦ Lost and Found ◦ Lunch Bunch 	14

Introduction

Background Information on the Montessori Method

Maria Montessori was born in 1870 in Italy. Until her death in 1952, she devoted her life to developing a system for educating young children. Her system has influenced virtually all early childhood programs.

The Montessori Method has two generalized features. The first is mixed-age grouping—a Montessori classroom (at Brookside) includes children ranging from two and a half to six years of age. This is advantageous because children learn from one and other and also help each other. A wide range of learning materials and activities (or “jobs”), suitable for all ages, are available.

The second key feature of the Montessori Method is self-pacing—all children are free to learn at their own rate and level of achievement. The child chooses which activity/“job” to participate in and works at his/her own pace. Through observation, the teacher determines when a child has perfected a particular activity/“job” and is ready to move on to a higher level or more difficult exercise. The teacher provides additional help and instruction if a child performs a task incorrectly.

Traditionally, the Montessori teacher is called a Director/Directress, because their role is to direct rather than to teach. The role of the Directress includes:

- ◆ making the children the center of learning
- ◆ encouraging the children to exercise their freedom to decide
- ◆ observing the children in order to properly prepare the learning environment

The Directress recognizes sensitive periods and diverts any unacceptable behavior into meaningful tasks. She guides the child without letting him/her feel her presence too much. The Directress is there to “prepare the path and step aside to let the child walk.”

Maria Montessori believed that the child learns best in a prepared environment. The purpose of this type of environment is to make the child independent from the adult. It is a place where the child can do things for himself/herself. The learning materials are placed in an esthetically pleasing way as well as in a developmental sequence. The environment is constructed in proportion to the child and his/her needs--all materials are arranged on low shelves for easy access by children. Following introduction to the prepared environment, children are free to come and go according to their desires and needs. They decide for themselves which learning materials to work with.

Although the Montessori Directress believes in freedom for the child and in the child's ability to exercise that freedom, this does not mean the child is free to make unlimited choices. Within the framework of choices provided by the Directress, the student is free to choose. The child must know how to properly use the materials before he/she may choose to work with them. Choice is a product of self-control and discipline. There is an external order and associated set of rules for the learning environment which yields the internal order of control.

The Montessori classroom is divided into three main areas. The Practical Life area offers children the opportunity to practice a wide variety of self-help skills. There is a sequence of steps followed throughout the year that introduces new and more complex skills. Practical Life activities incorporate small muscle use and eye-hand coordination.

In the Sensorial area, children work with visual, auditory and tactile discrimination exercises. They learn to recognize differences between colors, shapes and sizes. Learning materials in this area can be used in a variety of ways and on several different learning levels. The Sensorial area includes Science and Geography centers.

The Academic area introduces children to numbers (recognition, sequence and counting) and early mathematical concepts. Additionally, a phonetic approach is used to teach pre-reading skills. Self-pacing is important in this area as it leads to individualized instruction.

Aside from the traditional Montessori curriculum, Brookside offers many extras. Weekly activities in Art, Yoga and Spanish language are incorporated in to varying monthly themes for instruction. Field trips and holiday activities are planned several times throughout the year. Our extensive playground offers several pieces of climbing equipment and spacious, grassy yard.

Brookside Montessori School History

The Brookside Montessori School began operation in 1974. It was originally located in Camp Hill, PA, housed in a small building adjacent to a church where a brook ran through the property, hence the name Brookside. The current location, at 3708 Rosemont Avenue in Camp Hill, PA, was built specifically to house the school and was completed in January of 1990. Several additions, including the separate Kindergarten classroom, have been added since that date.

Brookside Montessori School is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as a Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten.

Brookside Montessori School is an equal opportunity educational institution and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap in its activities, programs or employment practices as required by Title VI, Title IX and Section 504/A.D.A.

Program Information

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Brookside offers preschool in three, four or five day-a-week, full-day programs. The five day-a-week program is also available in half days. Children are required to be at least 2 years, 9 months of age and potty-trained before enrolling. Preschool children spend their school day in the Montessori classroom, focused on Montessori activities, rotating between Practical Life, Sensorial and Academic. The teacher-to-student ratio in the preschool program is kept at 1:10 or better.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The full-day Kindergarten includes approximately 5-10 children. The children who are enrolled in the full-day Kindergarten will spend their mornings in the separate Kindergarten classroom, away from the Montessori classroom. The children will work both individually and in small groups during the Kindergarten morning session. Daily activities involve refining their printing, number and pre-reading skills. Each child will have on-going projects/booklets with the alphabet, colors and shapes. Children are read to on a regular basis. The small number of children in the program allows for a great deal of individualized instruction.

During the week, the Kindergarten children will work on a variety of cross-curricular units. Many hands-on experiences are incorporated into each unit. Children also take part in group Art, Yoga and Music lessons once a week. After the lunch break and a free-play period (on the playground whenever it's possible), the Kindergarten children return to the Montessori classroom for involvement with the multi-aged group in Montessori activities.

The year concludes with an informal graduation ceremony and celebration. Family members are invited to attend.

Brookside Montessori School Staff

SUSAN CURLEY - Our Brookside Directress has a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, PA. Miss Curley also has full Montessori training and Montessori Certification. Susan has been with Brookside as a teacher since 1985, acquiring ownership in 1989. She will be the lead teacher in the Montessori classroom.

SARAH BYERLY- Sarah joined the Brookside Staff as a teacher's aid in the Montessori pre-school during the 2012-13 school year. She has a BS in Early Childhood Education and completed her Montessori training in 2013. Sarah is the Brookside Kindergarten teacher and will be teaching 5 full-days. She is a former Brookside Graduate.

JULIE ANGINO - Julie Angino, or Mrs. Angino to the children, joined the Brookside staff in 2024. She will be working part-time in the Montessori Classroom. Previously, Julie taught at Brookside in the Pre-school and as a Kindergarten aide. She also has 15 years experience teaching Pre-school and Kindergarten at a private school. Julie has a B.S. in Early Childhood and Elementary Education from the University of Pittsburgh. She is also the Mother of a Brookside graduate.

ANTOINETTE ALITTO- Antoinette fills in as a substitute-teacher when needed. She is the mother of two Brookside graduates and joined our staff when her oldest was a student at Brookside. Antoinette is a certified language teacher who has taught in the Camp Hill School District , The Harrisburg Academy, and Harrisburg Area Community College.

JODY CLEMENT- Mrs. Clement joined the staff in 2021 as a teacher's aide. She attended Millersville University majoring in art therapy. She has six years of experience as a teacher's aide and substitute teacher. She will be working part-time and running our art program.

General Information

DAILY SCHEDULE

From	To	
08:20:00 AM		Doors Open
08:30:00 AM	09:00:00 AM	Montessori Activities
09:00:00 AM		Calendar Time begins Kindergarten Class Time begins
11:15:00 AM	11:30:00 AM	AM Session / Half-Day Student Dismissal
11:30:00 AM	12:45:00 PM	Lunch and Free-Play for all Full-Day Students
12:45:00 PM	02:45:00 PM	Montessori Classroom Activities for all Full-Day Students
02:45:00 PM	03:00:00 PM	Full-Day Student Dismissal

TEACHER IN-SERVICE DAYS

Throughout the school year, there are days scheduled as Teacher In-Service Days. The purpose of these days is to allow the staff to meet for general school discussion, monthly school theme and activity planning and to thoroughly clean and disinfect all shelves and materials. Since Montessori learning materials follow a prescribed sequence, new and updated activities are also added to the shelves at this time.

MONTHLY THEMES

Each month a new topic, or theme, will be the focus of discussion during daily calendar time. Stories, songs, activities and field trips will be centered around the theme of the month. Our monthly newsletter, the **Brookside Bulletin**, will keep parents informed of upcoming themes and associated events and activities.

NEWSLETTERS

At the start of each month during the school year, our school newsletter, **the Brookside Bulletin**, will be published and available on-line at our web-site: www.brooksidemontessori.com. Newsletters may be accessed/viewed, downloaded and printed via the website. Parents may subscribe to receive newsletters via e-mail by using the subscribe function offered on the newsletter page of the website.

Parent Information

HOURS OF OPERATION

Doors open at 8:20 AM for drop-off of all AM/Half-Day and Full-Day Program children. Pick-up for AM/Half-Day Program children is promptly at 11:15 AM - 11:30 AM. Pick-up for all Full-Day Program/Kindergarten children is promptly at 2:45 PM - 3:00 PM. Parents who arrive after the above closing times will be assessed a late fee.

TUITION PAYMENTS

The yearly tuition is broken into 10 payments, with first payment being due on August 1 of the current school year. The remaining 9 monthly payments are due on the 1st of each month. A late payment fee will be charged for any tuition payments received after the 5th of each month. If you choose, tuition may be paid by semester or in full for the year at the start of the year. A Tuition Drop Box is available for your convenience, on the shelf by the cubbies at the school entrance.

LATE FEES

Pick-up times are strictly enforced. We do, however, understand the occasional emergency—please call to let us know if you will be late. A late fee will be charged if you arrive late to pick up your child. The fee is \$10.00 for the first 1-15 minutes with an additional dollar per minute added after the first 15 minutes. Please be ready to pay this when you arrive.

PARKING

Please follow the arrows through our parking lot to help us in alleviating any traffic flow problems. Parking spaces in the front-right side of the lot (closest to the school), are reserved for teachers. PA State Law requires designation of a handicap parking space in our lot. This space is marked. As a courtesy to others, please use this space only if your vehicle displays the appropriate handicap sticker/license plate.

It is the duty of each parent to walk your child to the doors when dropping them off (always remembering to use the walkway, not walking through our garden)--parents should refrain from parking in front of the doors and please use designated parking spaces. For the safety of others, never leave your vehicle running in the parking lot.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We encourage any parent who feels they have something to offer/add to our program to contact a member of our staff. We always need snack helpers and lunch helpers. Sign-up sheets for helpers are available on the bulletin boards located in the cubbie area at the entrance to the school. Additionally, any parents who enjoys working with young children should contact a staff member to be added to our substitute list. Clearances are required.

CONFERENCES

If you are interested in scheduling a parent/teacher conference or an observation, please contact a member of the staff to schedule. Kindergarten conferences will be scheduled in November. As we start a new school year, no conferences will be scheduled prior to the end of October in order to allow adequate time for the staff and the students to acclimate to the new schedule and environment. Parents with questions or concerns can email one of the staff. The staff will contact you if we see reason for concern.

PARENT CORRESPONDENCE

Parent Mailboxes are located to the left of the main entrance. You should check your mailbox when picking up your child for any correspondence.

SIGN-UP SHEETS

All parents who sign-up are required to have clearances on file at the school.

We rely on parents to provide transportation for our field trips. Whenever a field trip is pending, sign-up sheets will be posted on the bulletin board, letting parents know the number of drivers needed to support the event. Unfortunately, we will have to cancel trips when we don't have adequate support for drivers. PLEASE HELP WHEN YOU CAN.

Throughout the year, we acknowledge a variety of special days and holidays. To mark the occasion, children/parents may sign up to bring a special treat to school to honor these days. Sign-up sheets will also be posted for special occasions.

If you would like to bring a birthday treat on your child's birthday, please contact one

of the staff. Individually prepared snacks/treats are requested and **NO CAKES OR CUPCAKES PLEASE**.

Sign-up sheets for snack helpers and lunch helpers will also be posted on the bulletin board.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS.

Throughout the year there are a few holidays which Brookside acknowledges with special celebrations involving all children.

In October, we host a Halloween Trunk or Treat and party. The children will come to school in costume. The Trunk or Treating will take place in the parking lot next to the school, followed by a party back at the school. Parents are invited to join the festivities by decorating their cars and providing treats for the Trunk or Treating.

In December we host a "Winter Program and Party" at a location off school property. All families are invited to attend for a performance by the "Brookside Chorus", followed by a brief celebration with food and beverages provided by our parent volunteers. A modified school day is also noted on the calendar for this date which marks the end of the first semester and the start of our year-end break.

In February we host a Valentine's Day Party at the school. A modified school day is noted on the calendar for this date.

Our school year concludes with an "End-of-Year Picnic", held on the last day of school, also off school property.

FUND RAISING

Since Brookside Montessori is a private school, we receive no State financial assistance. Tuitions cover building expenses, teacher salaries, taxes and other school essentials. Many of the extras offered by Brookside are a result of the generosity of former Brookside families. We will not ask our families to do any type of fund raising during the school year. We will ask families for donations once during each school year.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In cases of inclement weather, our decision to close or delay the school for the day will be made by 7:30 AM. School closings and delays will be listed on our website. We will also send e-mails to all parents on our mailing list.

REGISTRATION TIME

Registration for the next school year takes place in January. Spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis, with current students and families given priority.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL POLICY

It is our policy that staff members are not permitted to dispense any prescribed or non-prescribed medication to children. If your child requires medication during school hours, other arrangements must be made by you.

It is also our policy that children should not return to school for at least 24 hours after a fever breaks. For the well-being of all other students, please adhere to this policy. Additionally, any communicable illnesses should be reported to the school, so that we may notify other families when something is "going around."

If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be contacted to pick him/her up as soon as possible. Children that are sent home ill should not return for at least 24 hours. It is important that we have a current list of contact people for your child who can be reached in the event of an emergency.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is the policy of Brookside Montessori to discipline in a positive manner. Respect for the rights of others and the environment are esteemed values. Limits are set by the staff to ensure safety and order. Rules are kept to a minimum, focused on those deemed most important, and are enforced consistently. Children are reminded of what they should be doing rather than told what they should not do. Children are given a verbal warning when exhibiting inappropriate behavior. If after the verbal warning the child is still having problems, the "time-out" chair is used—the "time-out" chair helps to instill self-discipline. After a time-out, there is a private discussion between student and teacher to acknowledge the reason for the time-out and to review which alternate behaviors are expected in that situation. Spanking or any other forms of physical/corporal punishment are strictly prohibited at Brookside Montessori.

Student Information

"CUBBIES"

Each child at the school has their own cubbie assigned with his/her name shown. The cubbie is used to store any pictures or papers your child has completed during the school day. It should be checked daily to avoid overflow. Your child's Activity Book will also be stored in their cubbie. These are for school use and can be reviewed by parents when picking up your child from school. These books should not be removed from school until the end of the school year.

ACTIVITY BOOKS

Each child has his/her own Activity Book. This book contains a listing of all classroom activities. When your child has been introduced to a new activity/ "job" or spends time working on any activities, the teacher will check off the appropriate space. This method is intended to give parents a view of their child's progress. If you ever have any questions regarding information or notations in your child's Activity Book, please speak to a staff member. When you drop your child off each day, please encourage them to retrieve their Activity Book from their cubbie—it is their responsibility to keep track of their Activity Books each school day.

SNACKS

During both morning and afternoon sessions, a snack is offered to all students. A snack will be introduced to the students and set-up at the designated "snack table." The children serve themselves and are responsible for cleaning up their own area when finished. If your child is on a special/restricted diet or has any food allergies, please alert the staff to ensure alternate/appropriate snacks are always available for your child. Children should bring a water bottle from home to use during snack time, lunch time, and on the playground. We request that it is an insulated non-glass container (no sippy cups please).

CLOTHING

There is no strict dress code at Brookside. We only suggest that children are dressed for school in comfortable, non-restrictive clothing which is suitable for both indoor and outdoor play. Sturdy outdoor play shoes are required, **no flip-flops or sandals please.** All Brookside students are required to have separate indoor shoes to wear in the classroom area.

INSIDE-SHOES - children should each have a pair of indoor shoes to put on before entering the classroom learning areas. This helps us keep the area more sanitary and alleviates puddles of water on rainy or snowy days on the floors where children sometimes sit. It is preferred that these shoes have rubber soles to avoid slipping and sliding on the floors.

SCHOOL T-SHIRTS

"Brookside Blues" (our school logo-wear) can be ordered for both children and parents at the start of each school year. Logo-wear is available in t-shirts and sweatshirts. We encourage each child to have a shirt/sweatshirt to wear on our school trips. This helps us identify our group and keep everyone together.

STUDENT CORRESPONDENCE

A student roster/class list composed of names and addresses for all current student families will be created each year to aide in student interactions including car-pooling, arranging play dates, etc. We ask that you use the class list to send party invitations as opposed to bringing them into school for distribution. If you wish to have your information withheld from the class list, please speak to a staff member. Any changes to your contact information should also be brought to the attention of a staff member.

LUNCH-BUNCH

All children attending full-day programs (preschool or Kindergarten) are required to bring a packed, nutritious lunch and drink each day. Observable behavior changes have been noted after unbalanced meals or too much sugar. Please make every effort to send a well-balanced lunch for your child. Teachers and will assist the children.