

Early Childhood (ages 3 - 6 years) Questions & Answers

This document is not a part of the contract and is intended to explain procedures.

When is my child assigned to a class? Class placement is assigned in the summer after the majority of enrollment is complete. This allows for all placement factors to be considered: the balance of ages and gender, the makeup of the community of students and the distribution of siblings as appropriate. *Students enrolling mid-year are placed in classes where there is an appropriate opening.*

Can I request a teacher? We like to have feedback from parents. That is one of the factors we use in placing students. In addition to a parent's perspective, we look at the openings in a class for each age and gender, the characteristics of the current students, and the individual child's personality and maturity. Children are part of a class community for the full three-year cycle.

As our classrooms are designed by specific schedule and we do not move children from class to class each year, we request that parents evaluate their long-term plans for a school schedule. Of course, we will consider individual cases as they occur.

What is the purpose of a phase-in schedule? Children transitioning into a new setting need time to transfer trust to the new community, whether it is the first time the child has separated from the home or is a transfer from another school.

All students have a phase-in week in August just prior to the opening of school when they participate in a period of fewer days and fewer hours than their regular schedule. The child comes to class for short time periods and gradually increases the time until the child can stay the full period. During this time, the parent is not in the classroom, but may need to remain close by to give the child reassurance. The teachers will communicate with the parents to help the child through separation and adjustment. This phase-in schedule will be provided to you. Our goal is that the child is comfortable separating from the parent at the vehicle with a minimum of anxiety.

If a child cannot separate or needs longer to adjust, the teacher will work out an extended phase-in schedule with the parent. The guideline is that a child that can be comforted within 30 minutes or so is adjusting. A crying upset child that is not easily consoled needs a slower transition from parent to school.

Any child who enrolls after the start of school will be required to be phased-in slowly to the class. It is recommended that parents adjust their schedule so that the child can have the necessary time to settle into the class, which usually takes from about a week to a few weeks, depending on the individual child.

Must my child be toilet trained? In order to enroll in the Early Childhood classes (ages 3 through 6), children must be toilet trained and able to use the toilet independently. Pull-ups and diapers are not permitted. All children must wear underwear while at school.

We anticipate that children will have toilet accidents occasionally, and therefore request that a full set of extra clothing be at school at all times.

What is the purpose of mixed-age groups in Montessori classes? The Montessori levels of development are organized around common characteristics and the design of a learning environment that meets those social, emotional, physical and intellectual characteristics. The Early Childhood period of 3 through 6 years is one of sensory-motor explorations and concrete learning. It is when the foundations for trust, order, social relations and preparation for later academic education are established. The children need a consistent social setting in which to experience peaceful problem solving, cooperation and leadership. Since children develop at different rates and retain skills when they learn and teach peers, the mixed age class provides the best setting to help a child fill their individual potential.

Why are the five year old (kindergarten age) students in a class with the three and four year olds? The Montessori program is organized by developmental cycles according to specific characteristics of the child and instructional methodology. The environment for the Early Childhood child takes into account variables in the development of social/emotional, physical and intellect that occurs over the cycle. We believe the emerging social skills, developing independence and confidence and the habits of learning are foundations for academic skills. Children learn best when they work with a diverse age group as all three year olds are neither at the same place nor all five year olds at the same place in all areas of growth. Children acquire social skills, self-confidence and leadership as well as retain knowledge longer when they can share information and experiences with each other. *Remember, even adults do not live or work with only single age groups.*

What supplies do children need for school? TMA provides all classroom materials and supplies for the students. We give them a school tote bag of sufficient size to carry all necessary items to and from school. Students need to bring a complete change of clothes in a Ziploc bag (shirt, pants, underwear and socks) along with croc-style shoes that will be left at school. *Children do not bring back packs to school at this level. We do not have adequate space to hang or store the backpacks.*

What are the Arrival/Dismissal Procedures? Each family is given a carpool sign and will receive detailed driving procedures. Parents stay in the car and the staff will assist as the children exit their cars and walk to the building. ***Arrival is from 8:20 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.****

The staff will escort the children to their cars at dismissal (11:30 a.m. - 11:40 a.m. or 3:15 p.m. – 3:25 p.m.). The carpool sign should be displayed in the car window to facilitate dismissal. Drivers remain in the car and the staff will assist children into the car.

***Any Toddler/Early Childhood student arriving after 8:30 a.m. will have to wait in the front office with their parent until 9:00 a.m. (or the next half hour after their arrival), then they'll be escorted to their classroom by a staff member. Students will only be allowed to come into the classroom on the half hour (9:00, 9:30, 10:00, etc.). PLEASE DO NOT knock on classroom doors for entrance. Teachers need to focus attention on the beginning morning responsibilities so it's always best to be on time.**

Does TMA provide a Full Day program for working parents? Yes. This is a program led by a team of Montessori teachers that provide a Montessori developmentally appropriate educational environment for students who need a longer school day.

- The morning period (8:30 – 11:30 a.m.) is a work cycle for all students and includes snack, lessons, individual activities and group time.
- The mid-day period (11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.) includes lunch, recess and group time followed by two settings to meet different development characteristics of the groups (12:30 – 3:00 p.m.)
 1. Quiet rest period that may include napping and relaxing activities primarily for ages 3-4 years.
 2. Work cycle for ages 5-6 or Kindergarten level students who are developmentally ready for longer and more complex works along with the growing ability to sustain group instruction and projects.
- The late afternoon period (3:15 up to 6:00 p.m.) is composed of students ages 3-6 years and includes a time of snack, recess and individual as well as group activities.

What is the definition of non-class days and early dismissal days? These are days in which the classroom teachers are conducting parent conferences or participating in an in-service or professional workshop.

Are there programs for students on non-class days and early dismissal days? Yes, but only for those students enrolled in the Full Day program with full-time aftercare.

When are all programs closed? All classes and programs including the “Full Day” class are closed on all federal holidays, Thanksgiving Break (3 days), Winter Break (10 days), Spring Break (5 days), and snow/weather closings or other announced days on the annual calendar. TMA will announce weather related closings on local TV and radio stations, our website, the school’s voicemail and through email and text via RainedOut.com.

How do I schedule a time to observe my child? Visitors (including parents/family members) are not allowed to enter the building without an appointment. Please contact the office to schedule an appointment for observation purposes.

Is there summer camp at TMA? Yes. We typically offer an eight (8) week camp that is organized around themes that are of interest to children 3-6 years. All children enrolled in the summer camp program must be 3 years 6 months by June 1st and toilet trained. Registration is available in the spring.