



**COMP**

**COMMUNITY OF MONTESSORI PARENTS**

# Family Handbook



Spokane Public Schools  
*excellence for everyone*

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# NOTES

The mission of the Spokane Public Schools (SPS) Montessori Program is to provide a quality public Montessori education in a culturally, racially, and economically diverse school community.

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### **Spokane Public Montessori School Begins with CoMP**

Montessori in SPS celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2007. It was created by a committed group of parents. These parents began the organization known as SCAMC, Spokane Community Advocates for Montessori Curriculum. In 2008 the organization changed its name to CoMP, Community of Montessori Parents. The CoMP Board of Directors is the main governing board which oversees the Montessori program at both schools, Jefferson on the South Hill and Balboa on the North Side. It is CoMP's responsibility to maintain quality training, recognition, and support to classrooms in order to maintain good standing within SPS.

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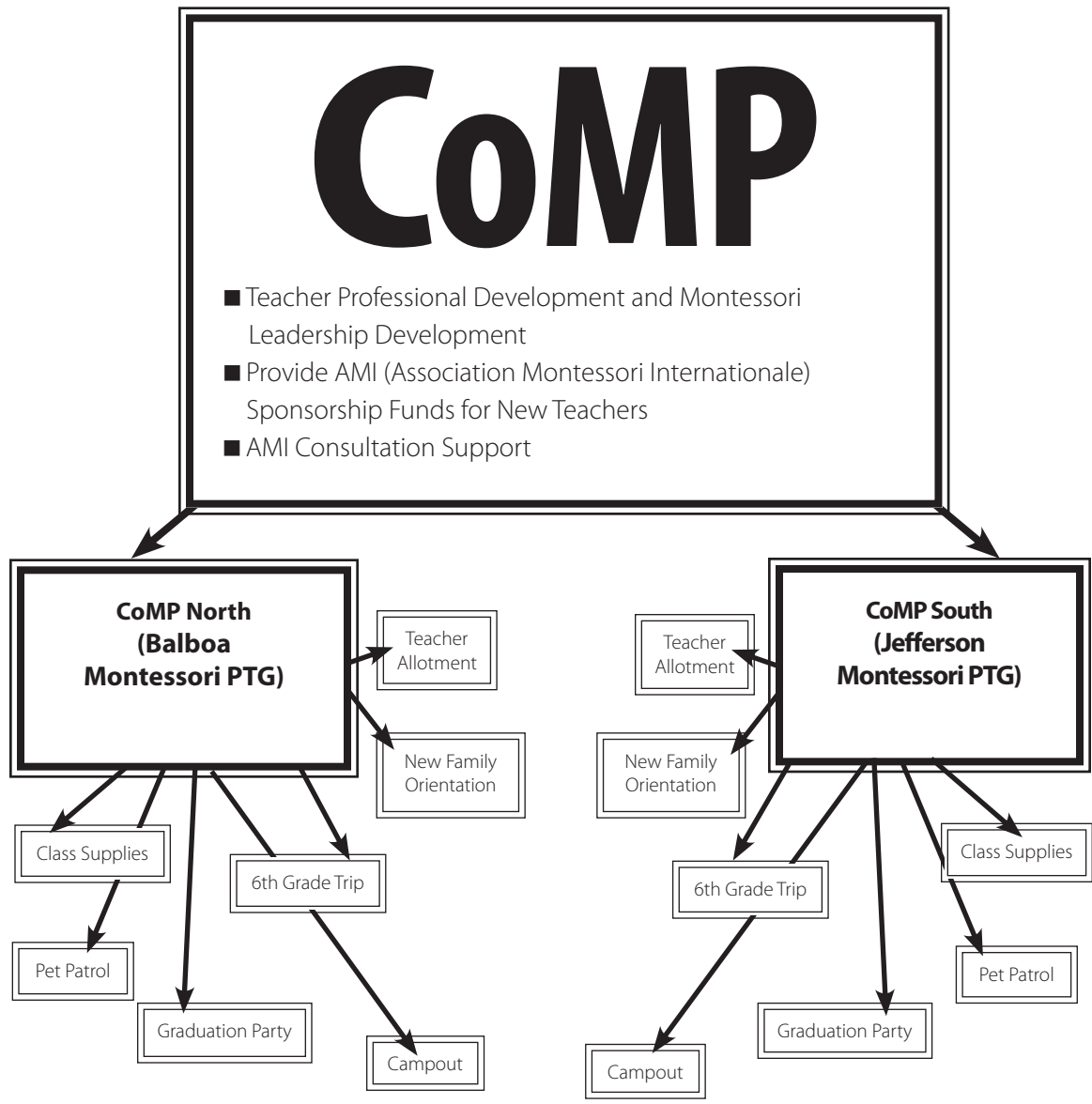
### **CoMP Objectives and Purposes Stated in the Bylaws**

- Develop a strategic plan for the future of the SPS Montessori Program.
- Increase the access of children to an AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) education offered by the SPS Montessori Program, including (1) increasing the number of Montessori classrooms, (2) assisting SPS with the hiring of AMI-certified teachers, and (3) offering information and other support (including financial) to assist persons in obtaining AMI certification.
- Facilitate and coordinate communication between and at teaching sites.
- Support teachers and provide them equal opportunities at teaching sites.
- Facilitate program objectives and activities at teaching sites.
- Assist SPS in community relations for the Montessori Program.
- Assist SPS in providing program evaluation for the Montessori Program.
- Serve as forum to address issues or concerns raised by any teacher or parent in the program.

# MONTESSORI FUNDING

# NOTES

Money raised and distributed by Community of Montessori Parents (CoMP)



## NOTES

## CoMP BOARD JOB DESCRIPTIONS

### CoMP OFFICERS

The CoMP Board of Directors includes four officers: President, President-Elect, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Treasurer and Secretary serve two-year terms. The President-Elect is in the first year of a three-year commitment. Year 1: President-Elect, year 2: President, year 3: Past-President (non-voting member).

### DIRECTORS

Directors serve two (2) years, beginning July 1, and may serve longer with the unanimous consent of the Board of Directors. Directors are appointed to the CoMP Board of Directors by CoMP North and CoMP South in the spring before taking office. The bylaws formally state the duties of the Directors as attending Board meetings; acting in the interest of, and at the recommendation of, the parent groups; prescribing the duties of, appointing and supervising CoMP officers; supervising CoMP committees; managing CoMP funds and approving all CoMP program expenditures; coordinating with SPS on announcing financial support for AMI trainees; calling All Parent meetings as deemed necessary.

### PRESIDENT

Prepare Board meeting agendas; appoint committee chairs (but not for CoMP North and CoMP South); prepare calendar of meetings; review student enrollment numbers; review any notice or media releases concerning the SPS Montessori Program; review Treasurer's records, meeting minutes, teacher sponsorship agreements and other documents; file an annual report; maintain archives; oversee and facilitate with the principals and administrators the enrollment process, including orientation meetings, printed materials and deadlines; coordinate and facilitate communication among parents, principals, SPS administration, school PTGs, committee chairs and the community; sign all contracts and obligations of CoMP that are authorized by the Board.

### PRESIDENT-ELECT

Preside at Board meetings in absence of the President. Assume Presidency the following year. Assist the President. Other formally stated duties include chairing the nominating committee, serving as ex-officio member of all other committees, reviewing committee and treasurer records semiannually, and assisting with the enrollment process.



## CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE (continued)

**In addition to observing your child, take a few minutes to also observe the classroom community as a whole. Look for:**

- The variety of activities that are in use
- The interactions between the adults and the children
- The balance of individual and small group activities
- Instances of helpfulness, whether spontaneous or suggested by an adult
- Examples of leadership – children helping other children

**Enjoy your visit and thank you for your support!**

## MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

In the early 1900's, Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first woman physician, developed educational materials and methods based on her belief that children learn best by doing, not by passively accepting other people's ideas and pre-existing knowledge. Dr. Montessori believed learning should occur in multi-age classrooms where children at various stages of development learn from and with each other. Her advice was always, "Follow the child."

The Montessori approach succeeds because it draws its principles from the natural development of the child. The first level of development occurs from birth to age 6, known as the First Plane of Development. At this stage, children are sensorial explorers, constructing their intellects by absorbing every aspect of their environment, their language and their culture. From age 6 to 12, the Second Plane of Development, children become conceptual explorers. They develop their powers of reason, abstraction, and imagination, and apply their knowledge to discover and expand their worlds further. Schools are organized to reflect these stages; Primary classrooms 3–6 year olds, Lower Elementary 6-9 year olds and Upper Elementary 9–12 year olds.

The Montessori teacher's role at the Elementary level is to inspire, "enthusing (the child) to her inner most core." (Dr. Maria Montessori, from *To Educate the Human Potential*). The teacher creates a dynamic classroom where children are free to work and explore in an orderly environment; she is there to help and encourage the children in their efforts, allowing them to develop self-confidence and inner discipline. Knowing how to observe constructively and when to intervene is one of the most important talents the Montessori teacher acquires through Montessori education and experience.

## ELEMENTARY YEARS

*“Beyond the more obvious reasons why it is sensible to group the ages three by three, such as the little ones learn from the older children and the older ones learn by teaching the younger, every child can work at his own pace and rhythm, eliminating the bane of competition, there is the matter of order and discipline easily maintained even in very large classes with only one adult in charge. This is due to the sophisticated balance between liberty and discipline prevalent in Montessori classrooms, established at the very inception of a class. Children who have acquired the fine art of working freely in a structured environment, joyfully assume responsibility for upholding this structure, contributing to the cohesion of their social unit.”*

**-Dr. Montessori**

Elementary children, typically, can be characterized by their questioning minds, their ability to abstract and imagine, their moral and social orientation and their unlimited energy for research and exploration. They move from the concrete through their own efforts and discovery to the abstract - thus greatly expanding their field of knowledge.

Children, at this age, are driven to understand the universe and their place in it and their capacity to assimilate all aspects of culture is boundless. Elementary studies include geography, biology, history, language, mathematics in all its branches, science, music, and art. Exploration of each area is encouraged through trips outside the classroom to community resources, such as libraries, planetariums, botanical gardens, science centers, factories, hospitals, etc. This inclusive approach to education fosters a feeling of connectedness to all humanity, and encourages their natural desire to make contributions to the world.

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

*Welcome to our school! We are pleased that you want to observe and hope that your visit will be enjoyable and educational. The following is a list of guidelines we would like you to follow during your visit.*

- Sign in as a visitor in the school office.
- Limit your observation time to about 30 minutes.
- Remain quietly in the chair provided for you.
- If a child approaches you, answer any comment or question briefly. Please do not engage the children in conversation or ask them to demonstrate activities.
- Please keep in mind that your child can respond to your presence in a variety of ways. Therefore, do not expect this to be a typical day for your child, but rather a chance to see some of your child's activities and a view of how the classroom functions as a whole.
- Make note of any questions that arise during your observation and arrange a time to meet with the teacher to discuss your observations.

**In order to make your visit more meaningful, here are some questions to consider as you observe your child:**

- What kinds of activities is your child choosing?
- Does he/she choose activities independently?
- Does he/she use the materials with care?
- Does he/she complete the activity and return it to the shelf properly?
- Is he/she working with focus and concentration?
- Does he/she work through difficulties or does he/she frustrate easily?
- Are her/his movements controlled and settled?
- Does he/she seek help when needed?
- How does he/she interact with the other children?
- Does he/she respect the work of others?
- Does he/she participate in group activities?
- Does he/she work cooperatively with other children?

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (continued)

### *Website and Additional Montessori Resources*

The SPS Montessori Program website is [www.spokanepublicmontessori.org](http://www.spokanepublicmontessori.org). A variety of information can be found regarding the program as well as links to the individual schools. The website is updated on a frequent basis and will be continually expanded. Other suggested websites and publications:

- [www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org)
- [www.montessori-ami.org](http://www.montessori-ami.org)
- [www.ami.edu/usa](http://www.ami.edu/usa)
- [www.montessoriconnections.com](http://www.montessoriconnections.com)
- [www.montessori.namta.org](http://www.montessori.namta.org)
- [www.spokanepublicschools.org](http://www.spokanepublicschools.org)
- *Montessori Today*, Paula Polk Lillard
- *The Absorbent Mind*, Maria Montessori
- *Teaching Montessori in the Home: The School Years*, Elizabteh G. Hainstock
- *The Montessori Method*, Maria Montessori

### *Parent-Teacher Conferences*

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice during the school year. The first parent-teacher conference is in November; the second is in March. These meetings are scheduled collaboratively between the parent and teacher for the weeks indicated on the school calendar. **It is highly recommended that parents observe in their child's classroom prior to conferences.**

### *Observations*

Parents and guardians are encouraged to observe in their child's classroom. Observation prior to each parent teacher conference is most helpful. Observers are expected to call the classroom teacher for an appointment at least one day in advance and follow observation guidelines provided.

### *Progress Reports*

Progress reports are issued three times a year. The first two reports are given in conjunction with parent-teacher conferences and the final report is sent home with the student on the last day of school. Progress information is also provided for Fitness and Health, Art, Music, and Library.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The task of the First Plane child (ages 0-6) is to construct himself/herself as an individual with functional independence: the ability to take care of one's own personal needs. The task of the Second Plane child (ages 6-12) is to construct himself/herself as a social being with intellectual independence: the ability to think for oneself. To aid in this self-construction the elementary age child exhibits particular psychological characteristics: a reasoning mind, imagination, conscience, a sense of justice, and a sensitivity to the group or the "herd instinct."

The teacher recognizes these characteristics and works with the students to establish classroom rules, procedures and guidelines for conflict resolution. The students are prepared to enter into the larger society with the ability to follow its laws because of their experience in the smaller "practice society" of the classroom.

### MONTESSORI AT A GLANCE

*All teachers, Montessori included, draw from a common source: the child and our "best practices" for teaching and learning. There are, however, unique aspects to a Montessori environment.*

- **3 year age span**  
(3-6 years, 6-9 years, and 9-12 years)
- **Individually prepared lessons**  
small group lessons (2-6 children)
- **Uninterrupted work periods (2-3 hours)**  
child schedules work
- **"Hands on" materials for self-teaching**
- **Limitation of material**
- **High child to adult ratio**
- **"Cosmic education"**  
term used to describe the unique curriculum, materials, and methods developed by Dr. Maria Montessori
- **Limited testing**  
assessment based on observation, student work journals and portfolios, meetings with teacher
- **No grades**  
anecdotal reports of social and psychological development, academic progress

## FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY: A Montessori Approach

| <b>Freedom</b>                       |   | <b>Responsibility</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Choice of daily work</b>          | → | <b>Making appropriate and varied work choices</b>   |
| <b>Amount of time on an activity</b> | → | <b>Staying on task and interested</b>   |
| <b>Use of glass, knives, etc.</b>    | → | <b>Proper care and handling</b>   |
| <b>Eating snack when hungry</b>      | → | <b>Proper food handling</b>   |
| <b>Using the bathroom</b>            | → | <b>Good hygiene and proper use of facility</b>  |
| <b>Resolving own conflicts</b>       | → | <b>Stating needs, no physical contact, seeking adult help when necessary</b>                |
| <b>Teaching other children</b>       | → | <b>Appropriate interaction, key points</b>  |
| <b>Movement in the classroom</b>     | → | <b>Walking, maneuvering between student work areas</b>                                      |
| <b>Choosing place to work</b>        | → | <b>Finding appropriate space for activity without interfering with another's work space</b> |
| <b>Working outside</b>               | → | <b>Staying within sight of windows</b>  |
| <b>Traveling throughout building</b> | → | <b>Walking in hallways, knowing how to get to destination</b>                               |

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (continued)

### Field Trips

Dr. Montessori said that primary age children explore with their hands, elementary age children explore with their feet. She was referring to the need of this age child to “go out” and explore the larger world. Students extend classroom learning through community resources, such as a trip to the science center, museum, business, hospital, natural environment, etc. These experiences are a vital component of the elementary program. Permission slips are always sent home in advance of field trips. The student’s permission slip must be returned in order to participate. Some field trip experiences may incur an extra cost. CoMP North and CoMP South provide scholarship assistance on request.

### Fundraising

Montessori Program fundraising is conducted by CoMP, CoMP North, and CoMP South. All families are encouraged to participate. The funds raised are utilized in the schools for a variety of activities and materials (see pg. 3). Fundraising committees are organized each year. Please contact CoMP, CoMP North, or CoMP South to assist.

### Parent Services

#### Newsletters

Each classroom teacher provides regular classroom newsletters. The format varies from room to room. Additionally, CoMP publishes *The Montessori Advocate* several times during the school year. You can access back issues at [spokanepublicmontessori.org](http://spokanepublicmontessori.org).

#### Parent Information Nights

A series of parent workshops designed to inform parents about the Montessori philosophy and parenting issues are held throughout the year. Scheduled dates can be found on event calendars and on our website [www.spokanepublicmontessori.org](http://www.spokanepublicmontessori.org). Notices describing the sessions are sent home.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (continued)

### Meetings

CoMP, CoMP North, and CoMP South meetings are held monthly during the school year. All parents are welcome. Scheduled dates can be found in classroom notices and on our website [www.spokanepublicmontessori.org](http://www.spokanepublicmontessori.org). In order to have a specific topic addressed at a meeting, contact the CoMP President, the CoMP North Chair, or the CoMP South Chair.

### Evaluation / Assessment

Observation and student work sampling are the most prevalent methods of evaluating and assessing student progress in a Montessori program. Students also take State and District learning assessments.

### State Testing and Local District Assessment

Testing varies according to grade level. Please refer questions to your child's teacher. Results are discussed at parent-teacher conferences or upon request.

### Family Involvement

The Montessori program is based on the notion that family, working with the school, will provide the optimal success for each child. Parent involvement in the school life ensures the development of this partnership. Involvement is defined at multiple levels and begins when a child's application is entered in the school lottery process. It cannot end there, however. Our program has developed a list of suggestions for Family Involvement to clearly identify specific ways families can support their child in school (*see pg. 18*).

### Volunteers (Parent Involvement)

Volunteers are utilized in and out of the classroom for student and teacher support, special events, field trips, cultural presentations and guest speakers. Volunteers are often needed for recess, lunch, reading tutor program, the library media center, office, or instrumental music program. For our working parents, volunteering can be done from home by participating in the phone tree, creating fliers, or baking treats for upcoming events, etc. The school PTG offers a committee to organize volunteer efforts or parents may contact their classroom teacher or classroom liaison.

## SPOKANE PUBLIC MONTESSORI OUTCOMES (gr. 1-6)

### SOCIAL

Shows respect for others.

Respects materials and environment.

Uses good manners and shows courtesy.

Participates and works appropriately in a group.

Displays leadership.

### PERSONAL

Expresses needs and feelings appropriately.

Copes with transitions and challenges.

Exhibits self-control.

Shows responsibility for own actions.

Displays self-confidence.

### WORK HABITS

Chooses appropriate and challenging work.

Works independently.

Listens to and follows directions.

Organizes work and materials.

Works with concentration.

Completes tasks efficiently.

Completes work with care and pride.

Demonstrates persistence.

Displays a strong interest in learning and working.

Demonstrates responsibility for own learning.

### Washington State has developed Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) for academic achievement in:

- WRITING
- READING
- SCIENCE
- CREATIVE ARTS
- MATHEMATICS

For more specific information see the websites for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: [www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us) or [www.spokaneschools.org](http://www.spokaneschools.org).

## MONTESSORI VOCABULARY

**Absorbent Mind** - The ability and ease with which the young child ages 0 to 6 learns unconsciously from his environment.

**Reasoning Mind** - The emerging ability of the child in the elementary years to learn through abstraction and imagination.

**The Control of Error** - The possibility inherent in the Montessori materials of making apparent the mistakes made by the child, thereby allowing him to see his errors and to correct them. This "friendliness with error" promotes self-discipline and increased motivation for learning.

**Cosmic Education** - Dr. Montessori's plan for education appropriate to the developmental needs of the elementary age child. It is characterized by a multi-cultural, interdisciplinary, and interdependent approach.

**Cycle of Activity** - Those periods of concentration on a particular task that should be worked to completion.

**Deviated Child** - The child who has not yet found himself and thus is restless and difficult to control. He finds adjustment difficult and often escapes into a fantasy world.

**Didactic Materials** - The instructive materials which allow for auto-education.

**Discovery of the Child** - Dr. Montessori's awareness and realization of the young child's abilities and his spontaneous love of work and learning.

**Freedom** - The child's free movements and experiences in an environment that provides a discipline through liberty and respects for his rights.

**Normalized Child** - The child who adapts easily and has acquired the self-discipline and control necessary for a healthy life.

**Prepared Environment** - An atmosphere created to enable the child to be free to learn through activity in peaceful and orderly surroundings adapted to the child's size and interests.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The SPS Montessori Program meets the requirements for AMI/USA Associated School Status. AMI is the main body promoting the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori worldwide. AMI specifies strict standards to which the SPS Program adheres. An AMI/USA consultant visits the Program every three years to assess the Program's compliance with AMI standards.

### Administration

#### *Principal, Program Coordinator and Staff*

The staff brings a wealth of training and experience to the schools under the leadership of school principals and a district administrator. Each classroom has both a teacher and classroom liaison (parent volunteer). The liaison facilitates distribution of information to parents in each classroom on behalf of the teachers and the school PTGs.

To communicate with the principal, faculty or liaison please consult the school directory. The directory lists phone numbers and e-mail addresses or you can call the main school number.

### Admissions

#### *Application Process*

Applications are accepted for in-coming students, grades first through sixth, who reside within SPS boundaries. Because of the numerous applications the Montessori Program receives, there is a lottery process for admitting students. In order to be eligible for the lottery, parents must attend one orientation meeting. All eligible applications must be received on or before the deadline date. Applications received after this date will not be eligible for the lottery drawing. The lottery is held in the spring.

#### *Sibling Applications*

As with other SPS alternative programs, consideration will be given to students with a sibling currently enrolled in the program.