



"Follow the Child."
-Maria Montessori

MONTESSORI

Family Handbook



Spokane Public Schools
excellence for everyone

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Jefferson and Balboa Montessori Program is to provide a quality public Montessori program in a culturally, racially and economically diverse school community.

Spokane Public Montessori School Begins with SCAMC

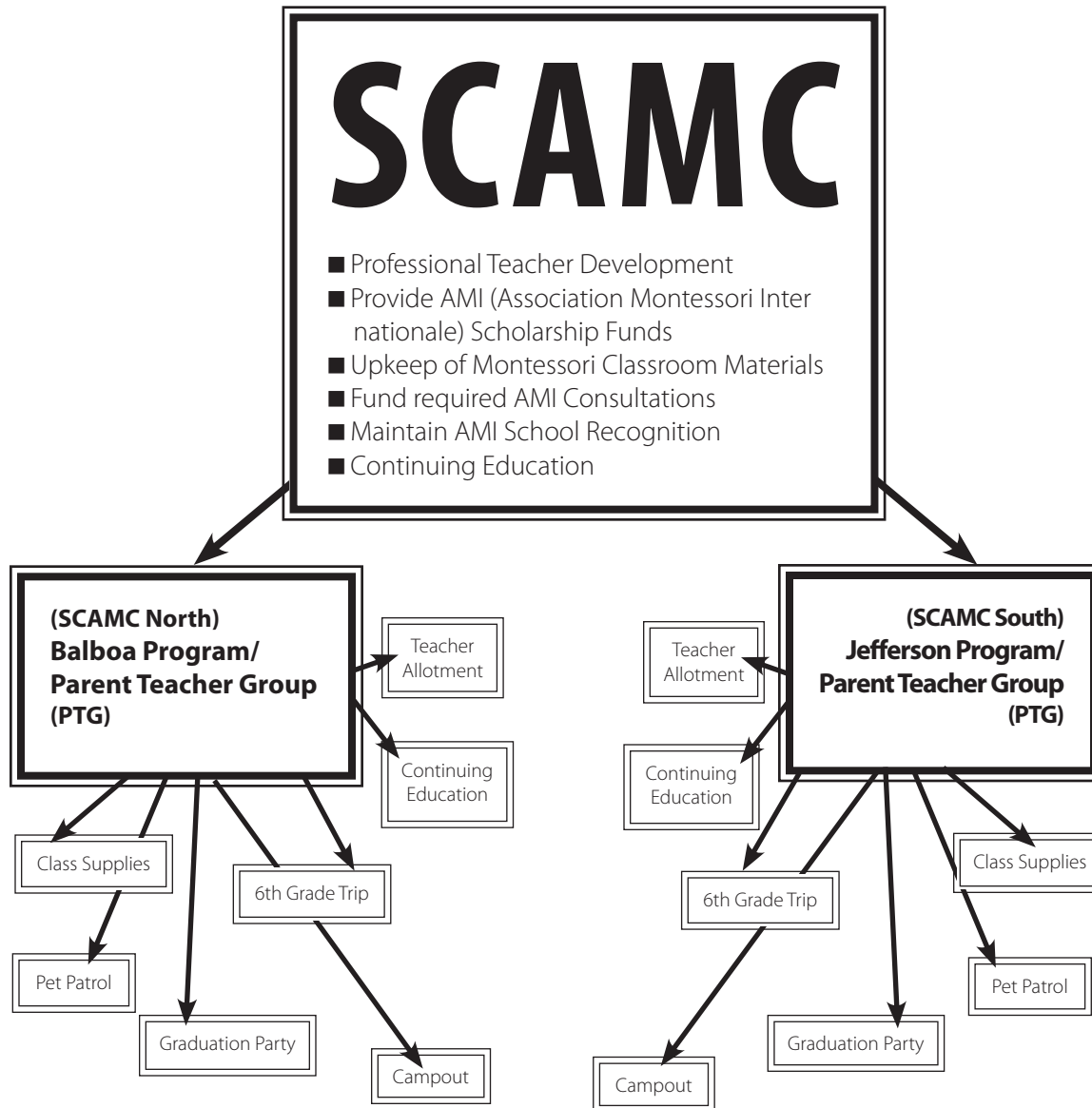
Montessori in Spokane Public Schools celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2007. It was created by a committed group of parents. These parents began the board known as SCAMC, Spokane Community Advocates for Montessori Curriculum. SCAMC is the main governing board which oversees the Montessori program at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

Overall SCAMC Objectives and Purposes Prescribed in the By-Laws (1986)

- Develop a strategic plan for the future of Spokane Public Schools (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

Money distributed by Spokane Community Advocates for Montessori Curriculum Program: SCAMC



SCAMC JOB DESCRIPTIONS

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 SCAMC Board of Directors by the respective Jefferson or Balboa Parent Teacher Groups in the spring before taking office.

The by-laws 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 SCAMC officers; supervising SCAMC committees; managing SCAMC funds and approving all SCAMC program expenditures; coordinating with SPS on announcing financial support for AMI trainees; calling All Parent meetings as deemed necessary.

SCAMC OFFICERS

The SCAMC 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).

PRESIDENT

Prepare Board meeting agendas; appoint committee chairs (but not the Parent Teacher Group, chairs or officers); 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 scholarship agreements and other documents; help prepare 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 SCAMC 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 and the school PTG, reviewing committee and treasurer records semiannually, and assisting with the enrollment process.

SCAMC JOB DESCRIPTIONS (continued)

TREASURER

Has charge and custody of all SCAMC funds and deposit of funds in the accounts of the bank selected by the Board. Receive and provide receipts for any moneys payable to SCAMC. Maintain records of SCAMC bank accounts and transactions, including check register, receipts, disbursements, assets and debts. Provide a Treasurer's Report at each Board meeting. Share with any Board member or any parent requesting financial information or records concerning SCAMC. Obtain signature cards for President and President-elect for signature authority on checking account. Provide auditor with any requested records and aids in preparing any financial statement or required report. Exercises careful and reasoned judgment in disbursing SCAMC funds and advises the Board on disbursement decisions.

SECRETARY

Record and prepare minutes of all Board meetings. Other formally stated duties include keeping a record of minutes, by-laws, official documents, and directories of parents; handling SCAMC correspondence; developing and maintaining a collection of publications relevant to the Montessori Program, including press releases, news articles, committee reports and documents submitted at meetings; scheduling the use of any rooms and facilities for meetings; making records available for inspection by any parent on request.

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 and Upper Elementary 9–12.

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 center, 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.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The task of the First Plane child (ages 0-6) is to construct 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 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

Freedom

Responsibility

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

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 or 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 to 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

Spokane Public School Montessori Program is an associated public school recognized by AMI/USA (Association Montessori Internationale). This is the main body promoting the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori worldwide. AMI specifies strict guidelines which we as a program adhere to.

At each school we host consultation visitations by AMI/USA every 3 years. As a parent supported board for Spokane Public Schools Montessori, SCAMC sets aside 1/3 of the cost each year in anticipation of the consultant's visit. The general cost associated with the 2007 visits was \$4,000.00. We also maintain AMI and NAMTA dues on a yearly basis, which totals \$845.00

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. The liaison facilitates distribution of information to parents in each classroom on behalf of the teachers and the school PTG.

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 District 81. 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 by the deadline date; the student lottery is held in the spring. Applications received after this date will not be eligible for the lottery drawing. Applications are available in the school office or on the website at www.spokanepublicmontessori.org.

Sibling Applications

Currently, younger siblings are automatically offered a space in the Jefferson and Balboa Montessori Programs. An application must be completed prior to the lottery. The spirit of the sibling admission policy is to provide cohesiveness for all children in the same family while providing an equal opportunity for all students who desire to attend the school.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (continued)

School Meetings and Parent Workshops

The Montessori Parent Teacher Group meetings (SCAMC North and SCAMC South) are held monthly during the school year. In order to have a specific topic addressed at a meeting, contact the President.

A series of parent workshops are held throughout the year. Notices can be found on our website www.spokanepublicmontessori.org or through classroom notices.

Evaluation / Assessment

Observations 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.

WASL (Washington Assessment for Student Learning)

The WASL test is administered in April to students who are grades 3, 4, 5 and 6. There are several different sections to the WASL: Reading, Writing, Math, and Science. Different sections are administered different years. Please refer to your specific teacher. The results are reported to students and their parents.

District Reading, Writing and Math Assessment

Students are individually administered a reading assessment twice a year in grades 1-2. These assessments can help determine the independent reading level for each student and identify individual strengths and areas for improvement. In grades 1-6, students are given a writing assessment twice a year. Student writing assessments in grade 1 is described in terms of writing stages of development. Student writing assessments in grades 2-6 are scored according to a four point rubric on content/organization/style and a 2 point rubric on conventions (language usage, capitalization, punctuation and spelling). In grades 1-6, students also take assessments on the grade level expectations in mathematics. The scores will be discussed with parents at each parent-teacher conference 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

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (continued)

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 (Parental Involvement)

Volunteers are utilized in 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, and creating fliers or baking treats for upcoming events, etc. The PTG offers a committee to organize volunteer efforts or parents may contact their classroom teacher or classroom liaison.

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 planetarium, 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. The PTG provides scholarship assistance on request.

Fund Raising

Fundraising at Jefferson and Balboa is conducted by SCAMC of Montessori and the Montessori PTG of the respective school. All families are encouraged to participate. These funds are utilized in the school for a variety of activities and materials (*see pg. 3*). A fundraising committee is organized each year. Please contact the PTG to assist.

Parent Services

Classroom Newsletters

Each classroom teacher provides classroom notices. The format varies from room to room. Periodically, SCAMC updates parent information via a newsletter as well.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (continued)

Parent Workshops

A variety of workshops designed to inform parents/guardians about the Montessori philosophy and parenting issues are offered. The parent evenings are posted on event calendars and notices are sent home to describe the upcoming session.

Web Site and Additional Montessori Resources

Spokane Public School Montessori Program web site is www.spokanepublicmontessori.org. A variety of information can be found regarding the program as well as links to the individual schools. The web site is updated on a frequent basis and will be continually expanded.

Other web sites that are useful are:

- www.montessori.org
- www.montessori-ami.org
- www.ami.edu/usa
- www.montessoriconnections.com
- www.montessori.namta.org
- www.spokanepublicschools.org
- *Montessori Today*, Paula Polk Lillard
- *The Absorbent Mind*, Maria Montessori
- *Teaching Montessori in the Home: The School Years*, Elizabeth 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.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are issued three times a year in November, March and June. The first two reports are given in conjunction with a parent/teacher conference and the final progress report is sent home with the students on the last day of school. Grades are given in specialist classes **only**: Fitness and Health, Art, Music and Library.

Visitors (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 that are provided upon their visit.

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 your 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 do they 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?

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!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Introductory Activities

- Enrollment Family Welcome School Picnic
 Open House Family Mentors Auction

SCAMC PTG/Board Meetings

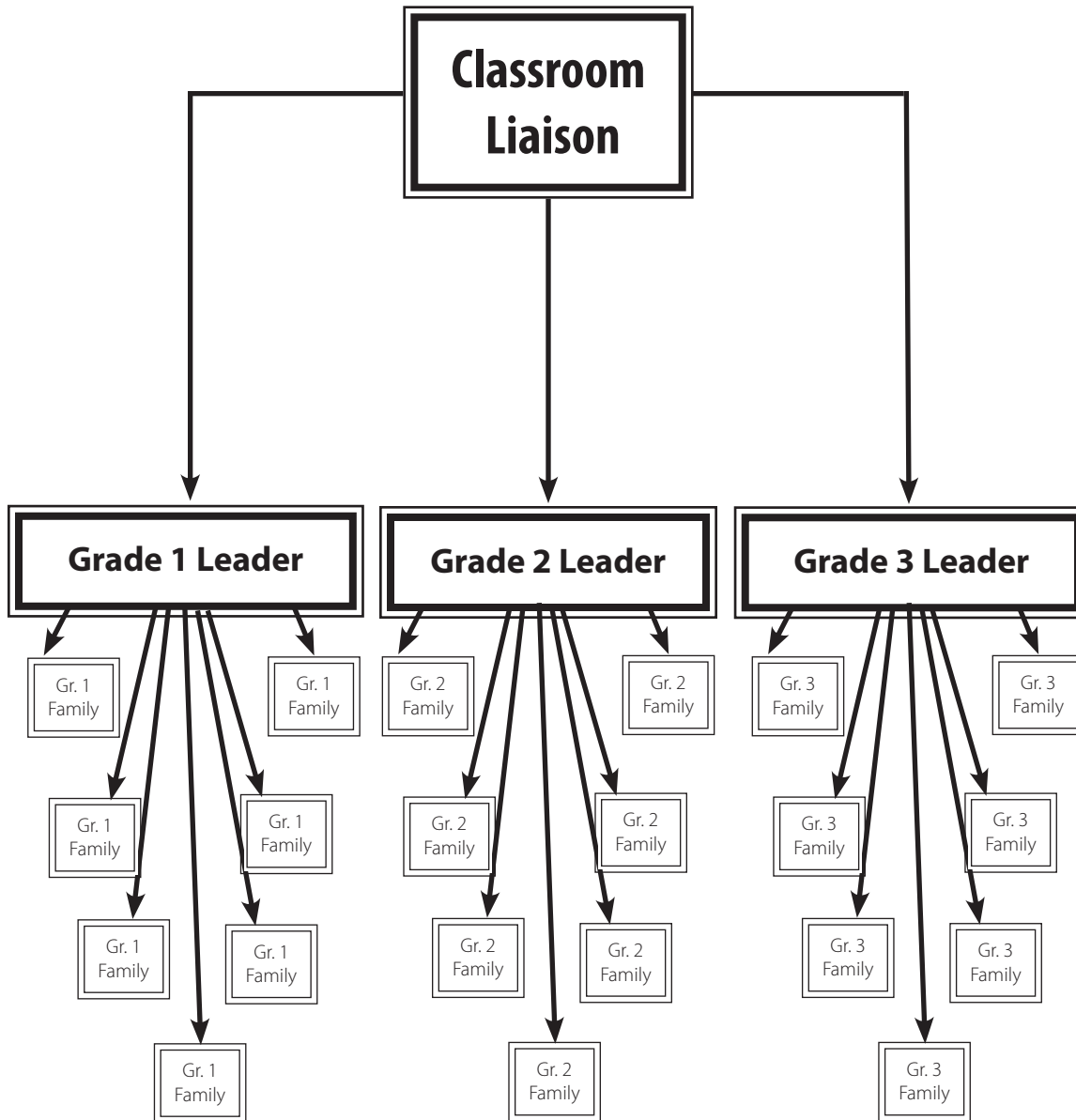
- Board position on SCAMC or Montessori Parent/Teacher Board
 Oct Nov Jan Feb
 Mar Apr May Jun

Parent Information Night

<input type="checkbox"/> Oct (new parent orientation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Nov	<input type="checkbox"/> Dec	<input type="checkbox"/> Jan
<input type="checkbox"/> Feb	<input type="checkbox"/> Mar	<input type="checkbox"/> Apr (campout mtg.)	<input type="checkbox"/> May (campout)
<input type="checkbox"/> Jun (Montessori dessert night)			

<p>Fundraising Events:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Appeal Letter Donation</p> <p>Parent Teacher Conference (per child)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> November <input type="checkbox"/> March</p> <p>Classroom Observation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fall <input type="checkbox"/> Spring</p>	<p>Social Activities</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Volunteer Activities</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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PHONE TREE



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