

Our Philosophy

Mission Statement:

Our school is dedicated to ensuring that children in the Methow Valley have the opportunity for a healthy and joyful early childhood education. Cultivating children's natural curiosity and creativity lies at the heart of our Montessori program. We encourage each child to develop as a whole person and acquire a life-long love of learning.

Dear Families,

Little Star Montessori School has been serving the children of the Methow Valley since 1982. Our school provides a rich learning environment that gives children the opportunity to develop self-esteem, healthy habits of communication, and their own unique creativity.

The Montessori Method considers the total human being - his/her physical, intellectual, social and spiritual needs. The mixed age grouping allows for rich social interaction; the older child finds a sense of accomplishment in helping a younger classmate, the little ones find role models and a sense of where they are headed by watching the older children. Social skills and confidence blossom.

The child's need to develop by exploring his or her environment is supported in the classroom by carefully designed materials and a teacher who guides the child's energy, interest and enthusiasm into self-enriching activities. Freedom within the prepared environment gives the children an opportunity to make their own decisions and discoveries and to grow at their own rate.

As our teacher-child ratio is small, we are able to give each child the individual attention s/he needs. Our curriculum includes life skills (such as grooming, housekeeping, and cooking), pre-reading/pre-math activities for preschoolers and reading/math skills for kinders, integrated with geography, history, science, music, creative movement, art, drama, and storytelling. Our environment stimulates the child's natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

Little Star gives the child the opportunity to make choices for developing creative, independent thinking as well as skills in group cooperation.

We believe that

Every child is special, therefore listened to with respect

Every child develops at his or her own pace and is accepted as a unique individual

Every child is curious, therefore encouraged to explore, to think creatively and to enjoy learning.

Parent participation is an important aspect of our program as children experience a sense of community and a feeling of enhanced personal worth when their parents take part in school activities. As part of our Little Star family, we want you to be involved.

Our chief interest is the self-esteem, education and welfare of your child. We feel it is important that you be fully informed about your child's needs and activities with us. We strive to maintain an open communication with our parents, which leads to a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation.

This information handbook is for your reference. It is a guide to our school policies. Please keep it on hand as you may wish to refer to it throughout the year.

Little Star Staff

STAFF

School Director

Nicole Ringgold
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Toddler Teacher/Afternoon Teacher

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Deidre Luvon
997-0221

Spanish Lessons & Gardening

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John Hayes
996-3404

Todder Program

Age Level: 18 months - 3 years

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1:6

Program Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:30am—12:30pm

Location: Upstairs classroom, next to the office

Lead Teacher: Florence Sawyer

Assistant Teachers: Halley Hart & Michelle Bosco

Morning Star Toddler Program focuses on the most vital stage of your child's life: the beginning. Our program encourages individuality, creativity and a love of learning. We encourage self discipline in an environment rich in motivation and activities. The social interaction develops awareness of self and others through work and play.

Using sensorial materials and group activities, this age group will incorporate basic Montessori teachings with practical life skills. Music, beginning art, puppetry and nature studies will also be offered.

As Toddlers need consistency and a sense of belonging to truly thrive. We require a minimum two day enrollment for this program. We have found that those toddlers attending only one day a week have a more difficult time making the adjustment from mom and dad to teachers and friends.. Toddlers will be given a snack, which is provided by the parents on a rotating basis. Parents are also asked to pack their child a nutritious lunch, diapers (if needed) and an extra set of clothes.

Toddler Daily Routine

8:30-9:30	Children arrive. Stories, creative play, individual and group activities.
9:30-9:45	Snack
9:45-10:00	Potty time, diaper changes.
10:00-11:00	Art projects, circle, and music time, individual and group activities.
11:11-11:45	Outside play
11:45-12:15	Hand washing and lunch.
12:15-12:30	Clean-up and goodbyes

Preschool Program

Age Level: 3 - 5 years

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1:8

Program Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:30am—1:00pm

Location: Downstairs

Lead Teachers: Sandy Welfelt & Kim Claussen

Assistant Teachers: Anna Bonica & Michael Wilbur

The Montessori method nurtures the whole personality of the child, not merely his intellectual faculties, which includes the power of deliberation, initiative, and independent choice. The child is encouraged to participate as a member of a real social community, our school. The child learns fundamental social skills which form the basis of good citizenship.

Children will be introduced to phonetic reading and beginning math skills integrated with art, drama, science, geography, puppetry and storytelling. Creative movement, Spanish and field trips will also be included in this program.

Through the use of Montessori materials, children learn and grow at their own rate and according to their own interests. The children develop independence and responsibility as they acquire valuable social, perceptual, intellectual and physical skills. Our open classroom environment provides a challenging and stimulating experience and fosters great joy in learning as the children make their own choices and discoveries.

This year, we will have two preschool classrooms. One will incorporate those children who attend school 4 days each week, while the other will incorporate those who attend 3 or fewer days each week. Both will hold the same daily schedule.

Preschool daily schedule

- 8:30-10:00 Children arrive. Free time (toys, art project, practical life materials).
- 10:00-10:15 Circle time, snack, sharing & singing
- 10:15-11:00 Recess
- 11:00-12:00 Challenging work time. Chose from math, language, and sensorial materials.
- 12:00-12:30 Lunch
- 12:30-1:00 Clean-up and recess.

Kindergarten Program

Age Level: 5 - 6 years

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1: 8

Kindergarten: Monday - Thursday, 8:30am—1:00pm

Location: Upstairs

Lead Teacher: Rayma Hayes

Assistant Teacher: Baylie Peplow

Our Kindergarten Program will prepare the child to move into elementary level education with the strong social academic skills necessary for successful learning. Our flexible structure allows the child to work with materials from preschool through elementary according to his/her interests and capabilities. Our environment offers challenging and stimulating materials to aid and direct academic, artistic and social growth. Our classroom is prepared to strengthen the child's ability to evaluate, which enables him/her to make constructive decisions. Decision making is considered the highest function of the human mind. Building self-esteem and learning how to cooperate in a group environment are key goals.

Everything the child has learned and experienced in her/his first four years of life will be elaborated upon in the kindergarten year. Language arts will be expanded through a study of literature while math skills will be reinforced in science class, cooking, or woodworking. Learning will take place as a unity of activity and thought. Art, music, drama and stories from around the world will emphasize multi-cultural awareness. Spanish and Creative movement will be included in our program.

Kinder daily routine

8:30 –9:00	Children arrive, Free activity time.
9:00- 9:30	Circle time (group lessons, sharing, singing)
9:30-10:45	Snack is served—children help themselves throughout the morning.
9:30-10:45	Challenging work time.
10:45-11:15	Outside play.
11:15-12:00	Stories, drama, puppets, art, quiet work time.
12:00-12:30	Lunch.
12:30-1:00	Clean-up, recess/play time.

Afternoon Program

Age Level: Preschool and Kindergarten

Student to Teacher Ratio: 1:10

Location: Upstairs

Program Hours: Monday - Thursday, 1:00pm—3:30pm

Location: Upstairs in the Toddler Room

Teaches: Halley Hart-Beck & Cicely Coleman

Our Afternoon Program is a relaxing, fun way for students to complete their day. Depending on the season, outdoor activities might include going on nature walks to the river, or a stroll downtown, or a visit to the horses. In the schoolyard the children love to play sports such as soccer, baseball and basketball. The children also enjoy playing in the sandbox or riding the bikes and tricycles around the path. On warm days the children put on their swimsuits and play in our little pool.

Inside, the children play board games, create fantastic structures with building materials, engage in art and cooking projects, or choose some interesting books. Every afternoon there is a quiet time when the children meet in a circle and stretch, sing, listen to a story and relax on a mat. Snack is provided before the 3:30 pick up time.

The afternoon program begins at 1:00pm. Parents may choose a set program time (i.e. 1:00pm - 3:30pm or 1:00pm-2:30pm) or choose to use our additional hour program when the need for additional care arises. Because the afternoon program tends to fill up, and we cannot accept more than 20 students each day, we require that you add your child to the Afternoon sign in sheet before 12:00pm that day.

Afternoon routine

1:00-2:00	Outside play
2:00-2:30	Story time and quiet free play
2:30-3:00	Project of the day
3:00-3:15	Snack
3:15-3:30	Clean-up

A faint, light gray silhouette of a person standing on a ladder, reaching up towards a five-pointed star. The person is wearing a short-sleeved shirt and shorts. The ladder is a simple wooden-style ladder. The star is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

***School
Policies
&
Procedures***

PARENT ORIENTATION NIGHT:

At the beginning of the school year we schedule a Parent Orientation Night. This is a great opportunity to meet teachers and parents and ask questions about the school and school policies. New families are required to attend this evening.

PARENT NIGHT:

Throughout the year teachers and parents get together to discuss a wide range of parenting subjects. Topics could include positive discipline, sibling rivalry, single parenting or any other topic suggested by our parents. We often open these evenings up to the community at large.

TUITION:

Tuition is based on an annual rate. The annual tuition is divided into ten equal installments. The initial non-refundable payment is due on July 15, which covers tuition for June 2008. The remaining nine payments will be due on the 15th of each month and past due on the 20th of the same month. **Payments received after the 15th will be charged a \$10.00 late fee.** Each family will be given an invoice in their parent cubby on the 5th of each month. We understand that occasionally unforeseen circumstances arise. If your family is experiencing hardship, or if your family has a seasonal income, please do not assume that we already know your situation. Don't hesitate to call the office so that a payment plan can be arranged. If tuition is delinquent more than two months in a row, the Board of Directors will send notice of an overdue tuition account and establish a tuition agreement policy with the family. Little Star Montessori School operates on a very tight budget and cannot allow students to remain in attendance with past due tuition accounts. There is a tuition box near the office window to drop off tuition payments or suggestions. We encourage your comments and suggestions regarding the school and our programs.

FINANCIAL AID:

Little Star maintains a scholarship fund to assist families with economic hardships to enroll their child(ren) in our early childhood programs. Please contact the school office for additional information and an application. All information is confidential.

MAKE-UP DAYS:

Each child is allowed **three** make-up days for absences due to illness. We ask that you call in advance to make sure there is space available on the day you choose to use as a make-up day. When using a make-up day, be sure you write **make-up** on the sign in/out sheet.

REFUND POLICY:

No refunds will be given on your initial 10% tuition payment. A two week *written* notice must be given for withdrawals if a refund of unused tuition is desired. This is necessary because our staffing is geared to enrollment. Full charges will continue until two weeks after notice is given. Written requests should be dated and can be mailed or put in the tuition box near the office window.

EXTENDED ABSENCES/VACATIONS:

If a family vacation or extended illness is two weeks or longer the family has two options:

- [1] Continue to pay tuition installments to secure your child's scheduled days.
- [2] Give two weeks written notice (*not applicable for illness*) and withdraw your child. When your child returns, pay a \$15.00 re-registration fee and choose from the days that are available.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES:

All programs start at 8:30am. All students *must* be accompanied by an adult and signed **in** and **out** on the attendance sheet with full signature. Those students riding the bus will be met by a staff member at the door and checked in.

The Toddler program begins at 8:30am and ends at 12:30pm. If you have another child in the preschool or kinder program who is here until 1:00pm, arrangements can be made to pick your child up at 12:45. It is important that you are prompt, as the little ones get very tired and the afternoon program begins at 1:00pm in the upstairs classroom. In addition, teachers cannot leave or begin their next-day prep until all children are picked up.

Little Star preschool and kindergarten students begin their class time at 8:30am and end at 1:00pm unless they are in the afternoon program.

Little Star offers an afternoon program from 1:00pm until 3:30pm for preschool and kindergarten children who would like to stay later in the day. Students may either be enrolled in the afternoon program or signed up on a day by day basis.

If Toddlers are at school after 12:45pm, you will be charged an initial late fee of \$10.00 and an additional \$5.00 for every 15 minutes thereafter. If your Preschool or Kindergarten child is at school after 1:15pm (s)he will be added to our afternoon roster which has a 1 hour minimum charge. After the first hour the afternoon program is billed in 15 minute increments.

All children must be picked up by 3:30pm at the latest. An initial late fee of \$10.00 for any arrival after 3:40pm and an additional fee of \$5.00 for every 15 minutes will be charged for those arriving thereafter. If you anticipate a late arrival, please call the Little Star office.

If someone else is picking up your child after school, it is necessary that you notify the office in writing, unless you have provided prior permission in your file. In which case, we ask that you notify us in person or by phone. We cannot release your child to anyone other than you unless we are notified by you in writing. Please do not ask a grandparent, neighbor, friend or anyone else to notify us of a pick-up change; we will not allow any changes unless they are authorized by you.

Please be consistent about signing your child in, and most importantly, out at the end of the school day. Please use your legal name when signing your child out. This is a state requirement and is for your child's protection.

VISITORS/ADDITIONAL DAYS:

If your child has a guest or relative visiting, we welcome him/her to join our classroom. The first visit of prospective students is complimentary. Please notify the office at least one day in advance if a guest would like to visit our school. Additional days needed for an enrolled student should also be arranged a minimum of one day in advance. An hourly charge will be assessed for additional days. *Payment for the visitor charge is due on the date of attendance.*

CALENDAR:

Little Star School will generally follow the public school calendar. You will receive a calendar in your cubby at the beginning of the year which will give more detailed information about our schedule. You will also receive monthly calendars detailing field trips, bike days, celebrations, etc. All of these can also be found on our web site.

SNACK:

Each day our parents provide snack on a rotating basis for the program in which their child is enrolled. You will be given a monthly snack calendar to remind you of your upcoming snack. Each child anxiously anticipates his/her snack day as this is also his/her sharing day. For parents who forget or are unable to provide snack on their scheduled day, we ask that you **please** provide a shelf item for our reserve. Please bring the snack to school fully prepared. We have a LOW SUGAR policy for snack and lunch. The snack should consist of two nutritious items such as muffins, fruit bread, fruits, vegetables, cheese and crackers, juices, or a combination. Let your child bring his/her favorite. Monthly snack calendars will be placed in the parent cubbies each month. Our “no sugar” policy is relaxed for birthdays and other special occasions.

LUNCH:

Provide your child with a hearty, nutritious lunch in a lunch box. *Please write* your child’s name on the lunch box and other containers. We request that you remember our **no sugar or junk food** policy in preparing lunch.

SCHEDULE CHANGES:

Please choose your days carefully! We realize that some changes may be necessary throughout the year, so we will work with you as much as possible in case a change of schedule is needed. A \$10.00 schedule change fee will be assessed following a one time per school year schedule change allowance. All schedule changes must be handled through the office and must be in writing.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

For attendance at Little Star School, Washington State Law requires that all children **MUST** be immunized appropriate to age, in the process of receiving immunizations, or exempt from immunizations. Please provide the school with a completed Certificate of Immunization Status form. Forms are available in the office. Please update your child’s immunization form as needed **OR** the school must have on file the parent’s signature showing exemption.

ILLNESS:

If your child is ill, please keep him/her at home and call us to let us know. If your child becomes ill at school, we will notify you immediately and let your child rest until you arrive. In case of an emergency, you will be notified. Please make sure you leave us with numbers where you can be reached during the day. If there are any changes in your phone numbers or contact information, please fill out a change of address form available at the office. **IF YOUR CHILD HAS VOMITED, HAD DIARRHEA OR A FEVER IN THE PAST 24 HOURS, DO NOT SEND HIM/HER TO SCHOOL.** In the hopes that this policy is respected, we allow each child three make-up days for absences due to illness.

ALLERGIES:

Make sure we are aware of any allergies your child may have. We are especially concerned about food allergies, since snack is brought to school on a rotating basis by parents.

MEDICATION:

When a student is in need of any medication at school, a written note (signed and dated) from the student's parent/guardian is required with the following information

- Student's name
- Name of medication
- Prescription number
- Dosage of medication, and
- Time(s) to be taken

The medication must be delivered to the school office by the parent/guardian in the original container with the student's name and dosage. Medication may be administered by your child's teacher.

In Spring and Summer, bring your child to school with sun lotion already applied. Washington State Law will not allow us to apply sunscreen without a signed medical release form.

CHILD ABUSE:

The school shall implement procedures to insure that existing public laws regarding child abuse are followed.

BIRTHDAYS:

We celebrate all birthdays with a special "circle of life." We tell the "story" of the child's life. It is fun to bring in photos of your child to include in our "story." Although we would love to celebrate each individual birthday with treats, with the number of birthdays to celebrate each month, it unfortunately adds too much sugar to our childrens' diet. If you choose to bring in treats for your child's birthday, healthy treats (i.e. muffins instead of cupcakes) are strongly encouraged.

CONFERENCES:

Toddler, Preschool and Kindergarten parent conferences are set up twice a year in November and May. These conferences are intended to give the teachers the opportunity to share your child's academic and social progress.

Please do not discuss your child's progress with the staff during school hours or without an appointment. This does not facilitate good communication concerning your child. If you have specific concerns or there has been a change or crisis in your family, we encourage you to set up a conference appointment as soon as possible. Good communication between our staff and parents is essential to our program.

FIELD TRIPS:

We often take field trips to local places. We alternate field trip days to ensure all children have equal opportunity to attend. Field trip dates and destinations will be included in our monthly calendars, and/or posted at the school and on our web site. Occasionally, the school needs transportation assistance on these outings. We depend on our parents to help us with transportation for our field trips. We ask that drivers are licensed, insured for liability and have workable seat belts in their vehicles.

CUBBIES FOR CHILDREN:

Each child will have a cubby in his/her classroom. Toddlers have two sets of cubbies; one in the classroom for jackets, shoes, extra clothing and lunches, and the other in the bathroom hallway for their art projects. Preschoolers and Kinders all have one set of cubbies located in their classrooms. Please remember to occasionally check and empty the cubbies.

PARENT CUBBIES:

Each family has a Parent Cubby, labeled with your child's last name, in the main entry area. Please check your cubby frequently as time sensitive materials will be distributed regularly. Newsletters, billings, informational material, snack schedules and notes from other parents and staff will be placed in the cubbies.

WEAPON POLICY:

Little Star has a no weapon policy. A weapon is defined as an actual weapon, any dangerous instrument, or an instrument that can be considered a dangerous instrument. We ask that children do not bring real or play weapons to Little Star School.

DRESS:

Dress your child in comfortable play clothes and shoes. Please leave a change of clothes in your child's cubby in case of accidents, lunch spills, mud puddles etc. As the weather gets colder, children will need warm coats, boots, and mittens. We can not let your children play outside without appropriate winter clothing. *Please label all items clearly with your child's name.* Lost items will be placed inside the front door. In Spring and Summer, please bring your child to school with sun lotion **already** applied. Washington State Law will not allow us to apply sunscreen without a signed medical release form.

SHARING:

We have sharing time during our circle (gathering) every day. The children are encouraged to share items from nature or that illustrate an experience they have had. The children are particularly fond of this activity and each would love to share every day. In order to be fair and accomplish other tasks in the day, each child's sharing day coincides with their **snack day**. Please leave personal toys at home as they often times get lost, broken and inevitably cause problems. If your child has a special blanket, stuffed animal or other comfort item which is difficult to part with, s/he can bring it and leave it in their cubby.

VIDEO POLICY:

Little Star is committed to outdoor activity and an active part of our philosophy is to minimize the use of television-type activities. Although we do not have a television, VCR or DVD player on the school premises, we use educational-style videos occasionally (normally in conjunction with a guest presenter) which are previewed ahead of time. We are always with the children during viewing time.

PARENT PARTICIPATION:

Little Star requires 2 hours of parent participation per family per month or 20 hours per year, September through June, thereby giving all the parents responsibility for helping maintain and improve our school. Participation hours may be filled one hour at a time, or for the entire year if parents are involved in fundraising and other long-term needs. Although it defeats the purpose of integrating with the Little Star community and helping us to meet our goals, parents may opt to pay a one-time fee of \$400 in lieu of participating. Those parents who fill committee chair positions automatically fulfill a 2-year participation requirement. Otherwise, additional participation hours are not carried over to the next school year.

If you have questions about how you can become involved, you can either stop by the office or view the online list of parent participation duties that we have posted on our website. There is never a shortage of tasks to complete.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Little Star Montessori School is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of community representatives and staff members. Parents and other community members who are interested in serving on the Board should contact the Board President. Little Star's Board of Directors meets monthly to discuss the overall well-being of the school. Each year the board will decide which day, time, and place to hold the meetings. The board helps organize event fundraisers, building maintenance, scholarship, and finances. Little Star will post notice of openings on the parent information board as they occur, or you may contact the office if you are interested.

PARENT INFORMATION BOARD

The parent information board is located in the front entrance of the school. This board will be updated monthly with the snack calendar, event calendar, fundraisers, and volunteer opportunities.

SUGGESTION BOX

A wooden suggestion box is placed in the front entrance of our school. We welcome you to share any concerns, ideas, or comments you might have verbally or in writing. New and fresh ideas from parents are what make this school so great! This box can also be used to pay your tuition.

SCHOOL PETS

Each class room at Little Star has at least one pet. As part of our curriculum we teach children how to care and treat pets. This year the pets are:

	Type of Pet	Environment
Toddler Class	<u>Fish</u>	<u>Fish tank</u>
	<u>Birds</u>	<u>Bird cage</u>
Preschool Class	<u>Fish</u>	<u>Fish tank</u>
Kinder Class	<u></u>	

All pets are contained in in their area and are not touched by the children. Parents will be informed by mail if other pets are brought into the school to stay for over 24 hours.

A light gray silhouette of a child sitting on a wooden chair, reaching up with their right hand towards a five-pointed star floating in the air. The child is wearing a short-sleeved shirt and shorts. The chair has four legs and a backrest.

*Little Star
Montessori School*

Parent Handbook

