

OAK TRAILS SCHOOL

Michigan's Oldest Montessori School

Established 1956

6727 Warren Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Admissions and Information
(734) 662-8016

INFORMATION HANDBOOK

ADMINISTRATOR

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WELCOME

Oak Trails School is licensed by the state, accredited by the Department of Education, a member of the Michigan Association of Day Care Providers, an affiliated school of the Michigan Montessori Society and the American Montessori Society. Oak Trails is a nonprofit corporation, nonsectarian, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, and creed, national or ethnic origin.

HISTORY

Winifred Wylie, a prominent Ann Arbor educator and lecturer, founded Oak Trails in 1956. Oak Trails School is the oldest Montessori school in Michigan. In 1998 Ms. Wylie retired and Nanette Glencer took over as administrator. Ms. Glencer is a **Certified Montessori** teacher at the preprimary and elementary level, and she has a Master of Education in Montessori Integrated Learning. She is one of the first teachers in the country to become a **National Board Certified Teacher**. Ms. Glencer is a presenter at national and local conferences and is committed to developing Oak Trails as a model school. Both of her children are alumni of Oak Trails and Ms. Glencer has devoted thirty years to Montessori education, ten of those years as teacher at Oak Trails.

Oak Trails' Mission

Our mission is to provide the best quality Montessori education that includes

- ◆ Intrinsic motivation
- ◆ Spontaneous activity
- ◆ Self-education
- ◆ Cooperative learning through peer education and social interaction
- ◆ Social and environmental awareness both locally and globally
- ◆ Growth in cultural awareness and knowledge
- ◆ Competencies through repetitive experiences
- ◆ Movement from the concrete to the abstract
- ◆ Development of the imagination and creativity
- ◆ Learning activities through physical activity and outdoor work
- ◆ An integrated curriculum
- ◆ A continuous progress model

In an atmosphere that provides a strong sense of community.

Oak Trails School Offers

- ◆ 1:8 teacher student ratio
- ◆ Developmentally appropriate practices
- ◆ Certified staff
- ◆ Multiage, ungraded classroom
- ◆ State licensed and accredited
- ◆ Spanish
- ◆ Country school
- ◆ Small family community
- ◆ Homelike atmosphere

LOCATION

Oak Trails is located in Northeast Ann Arbor and serves families from Ann Arbor, Belleville, Brighton, Canton, Dexter, Pinckney, Plymouth, South Lyon, Ypsilanti. There are three acres of natural woods and hills that provide a unique and wonderful learning experience for children. The children and families maintain three gardens. The children can observe an abundance of wildlife. Please see Appendix I for directions.

METHODOLOGY

The basic premise of the Montessori philosophy of education is the development of the potential that lies within and is unique to each child. With its emphasis on a child's individual abilities and creativity, the Montessori approach is as varied as the children in the classroom are.

The classrooms are multiage and ungraded and follow the planes of development. Internal motivation is the hallmark of a good Montessori program and emphasizes the child as the person responsible for his or her education under the direction of the Montessori teacher. The teacher's primary task is careful observation of each child to determine needs and to prepare a learning environment to aid the child's growth. This prepared environment allows each child to develop and learn at his or her own pace. As children learn new skills, they also learn how to learn. This develops attitudes and habits that will help in future learning. Please see Appendix II for a comparison of Montessori and traditional education. The Montessori environment at Oak Trails fosters independence, self-respect and respect of others, and promotes self-reliance. The classrooms cherish differences among people whether religious, racial, or cultural.

We follow the guidelines set forth by the American Montessori Society.

- Ungraded three-year age span.
- Parental awareness of the three year cycle
- A record keeping system
- Personal and group instruction
- Regularly scheduled parent and child conferences
- Observation policy
- Certified Montessori teachers
- Continuing professional development

STAFF

The class has a maximum ratio of 1:8. In order to offer an integrated curriculum, we have teachers that are specialists in art and music. Students experience these activities in meaningful context that allows large blocks of uninterrupted time. Spanish is taught and encompasses the culture and histories of the countries where Spanish is spoken. Spanish is taught to small groups of children for half an hour twice a week. All classroom directors have Montessori certification. All staff has American Red Cross Emergency First Aid and CPR certification.

Summer Program

Oak Trails also offers an eight-week summer program. Information about the summer program is available in February for the following summer. Please call (734) 622-8016 or email oaktails@comcast.net for a summer brochure.

PROGRAM

Our class is an ungraded, multiage class for children ages 3 through 6 (preschool through kindergarten). It allows each child a place to explore life at a level she or he can understand. The materials used are designed to lead a child from the simple to complex. Children have easy access to materials that are neatly and attractively displayed on open shelves. Montessori allows children to progress at their pace and is an individualized program. We also feature an integrated curriculum.

- ◆ The primary half-day program begins at 8:30 AM and ends at noon.
- ◆ The extended lunch program ends at 1 PM.
- ◆ The full day class begins at 8:30 AM and ends at 3:00 PM.

The components of the curriculum include music, art, language, mathematics, sensorial, geography, science and practical life on a daily basis and Spanish two mornings a week. The day has large group time during which children sing, do finger plays, and listen to stories. There is outside time scheduled every day. The balance of the day is spent in a small group setting with a teacher presenting material or in free choice.

Practical Life

This area features activities that encourage independence, order, concentration, and coordination. Children choose from a variety of works that includes learning how to buckle, pour, and serve snack, spoon, tong, wash tables, sweep, and dust. Art is also part of this area and includes a wide assortment of materials that are used in an open-ended manner. Materials include pencils, crayons, chalk, markers, paint, staplers, tape, glue, clay, and paper in different colors and sizes.

Sensorial

This area includes materials that help refine the senses and includes many works that involve seriation and gradation. The materials illustrate a variety of concepts such as narrow and wide, thick and thin, tall and short, lightest and darkest, rough and smooth, loud and soft. Exploration, imitation, initiation, and pattern completion are the objectives of this area.

Mathematics

The math area contains four distinct areas: 1-10, linear beyond 10, decimal system, and memorization of addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division. Each area contains a variety of works that illustrates the concepts appropriate for that area.

Language

We use a phonics-based approach for reading. We also incorporate sight words and whole language when it is appropriate. Each area in language has activities that emphasize beginning, middle and ending sounds, word building, and reading words. Handwriting is a built in feature of the language area and children learn to write as they are learning the sounds.

Geography

This area contains puzzle maps of the World and its continents. Children have the opportunity to learn the names, flags and location of countries. There is a heavy emphasis on the cultural aspects and parents are encouraged to share their culture and customs in the classroom.

Science

Science is a hands-on activity and in addition to the work on the shelves that includes biology, botany, zoology, and physical science the children have organized time outdoors to study nature. Our school is located on forty acres and is a wonderful outdoor lab dedicated to gardening, composting and exploring.

Since movement is intimately connected with learning, activities engage the child's large and small muscles as well as his or her senses and mind. There are materials to develop coordination, concentration, vocabulary, handwriting, numeric concepts, language, geography and musical awareness.

The program is supplemented by special events in the classroom, such as visits by local firefighters to explain fire safety or animal caretakers to show unusual pets.

Questions often asked about Montessori are answered in Appendix III.

ADMISSIONS

Admission is open to children aged 2 3/4 - 6. Oak Trails is a non-profit corporation, nonsectarian, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, and creed, national or ethnic origin. The application process starts with a parent visit and the submission of a completed application form returned with the appropriate fee. Please refer to the tuition schedule. Upon admission, health form and emergency cards must be completed and returned before the child may start class.

OUR COMMUNITY

Oak Trails School is a place not only for children but also for the families who care about them. The staff welcomes parents to observe in the classrooms and is eager to talk with parents about their child's activities. Parents with unique skills are encouraged to do presentations for the children. Special activities bring families to the school, from the annual Ethnic Taste Fest to picnics and festivals in the fall and spring. An active parent's organization provides support for the school program. The school's small size encourages a family-like environment. The outstanding learning environment is made possible by the school's dedicated staff. Each child is able to receive special attention because of the low student to teacher ratio. The licensed teachers and child-care staff work together to develop programs and create the home-like atmosphere that makes Oak Trails a special place for each child.

VISITORS WELCOME

One of the best ways to learn about the Montessori school is by observing a class in session, so we invite parents and children to visit us. Please call (734) 662-8016 to arrange a convenient time to visit a class. Scheduling an appointment insures that we will be able to meet with you exclusively and answer all of your questions. Registration forms and additional information are also available through this number. You may also e-mail the administrator at oaktrails@comcast.net.

APPENDIX I

Directions To Oak Trails School

From M-14 exit at Ford Road. Stay to the right. At the end of the exit turn right on Plymouth Road. Turn right on Vorhies. Turn right on Warren Road. Oak Trails is on the left (north) side of Warren.

From east bound Plymouth Road turn left on Vorhies. Turn right on Warren Road.

From west bound Plymouth Road turn right on Curtis. Turn left on Warren.

From Ford Road, go north on Prospect to Plymouth Road. Turn right.

Turn left on Curtis and left on Warren.

APPENDIX II

COMPARISONS OF MONTESSORI EDUCATION WITH TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Montessori

Emphasis on: cognitive structures and social development

Teacher has unobtrusive role in classroom activities: child is an active participant

Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline

Instruction, both individual and group, adapts to each student's learning style

Mixed age grouping

Children are encouraged to teach, collaborate, and help each other

Child chooses own work from interests and abilities

Child formulates own concepts from self-teaching materials

Child works as long as s/he wishes on chosen project

Child sets own learning pace to internalize information

Child spots own errors through feedback from the material

Learning is reinforced internally through the child's own repetition of an activity and internal feelings of success

Multi-sensory materials for physical exploration

Organized program for learning care of self-

Traditional

Emphasis on: rote knowledge and social development

Teacher has dominant, active role in classroom activity: child is a passive participant in learning

Teacher acts as primary enforcer of external discipline

Instruction, both individual and group, conforms to the adult's teaching style

Same age grouping

Most teaching is done by teacher and collaboration is discouraged

Curriculum structured for child with little regard for child's interests

Child is guided to concepts by teacher

Child generally given specific time limit for work

Instruction pace usually set by group norm or teacher

If work is corrected, errors usually pointed out by teacher

Learning is reinforced externally by rote repetition and rewards/discouragements

Fewer materials for sensory development and concrete manipulation

Less emphasis on self-care instruction and

environment (polishing shoes, cleaning the sink, etc.)

classroom maintenance

Child can work where s/he is comfortable, moves around and talks at will (yet disturbs not the work of others): group work is voluntary and negotiable

Child usually assigned own chair: encouraged to sit still and listen during group sessions

Organized program for parents to understand Montessori philosophy and participate in the learning process

Voluntary parent involvement, often as fundraisers, not participants in understanding the learning process.

Montessori children are unusually adaptable. They have learned to work independently and in groups. Since they've been encouraged to make decisions from an early age, these children are problem-solvers who can make appropriate choices and manage their time well.

They have been encouraged to exchange ideas and discuss their work freely with others. Their good communication skills ease the way in new settings.

Research has shown that the best predictor of future success is a positive sense of self-esteem. Montessori programs, based on self-directed, non-competitive activities, help children develop strong self-images and the confidence to face challenges and change with optimism.

APPENDIX III

QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED ABOUT MONTESSORI

1. **WHY SHOULD I SEND MY CHILD TO PRESCHOOL?**
Most educators and psychologists today agree that the single most important period in the development of a person's intelligence occurs between birth and age five. A child's mind is extremely absorbent and his curiosity is at a peak during these early years. When properly nourished and stimulated the child's mind forms patterns for learning that served him well throughout his life. The Montessori system of preschool education has proven to be one of the most effective and fastest growing methods to guide a child through these critical years.
2. **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DAY CARE, NURSERY SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL?**
Day Care Centers are generally for the purpose of caring for children on an all-day basis. Nursery Schools are generally experiences in socialization and play. Preschools are oriented toward educational experiences combined with socialization and play.
3. **HOW IS A MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PRESCHOOLS?**
In most preschools the children are taught educational concepts in a group by a teacher. In a Montessori Preschool the children learn concepts spontaneously as they work independently with the many materials in the environment.
4. **WHAT IS THE MONTESSORI METHOD OF EDUCATION?**
The Montessori Method of Education is basically a unique approach to learning. Rather than "teaching" the child concepts, an environment is designed to stimulate the child's interest and facilitate his understanding and learning capacities spontaneously with little or no adult intervention.
5. **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD?**
The main purpose of the Montessori method is to develop an environment where the child can unfold spontaneously and manifest the greater person within. According to Maria Montessori, "The child is the father of the man." As the child begins to develop this inner self, his love of life and learning expands continuously.
6. **WHO STARTED THE MONTESSORI METHOD?**
Dr. Maria Montessori, over 70 years ago, was Italy's first woman medical doctor. Using her scientific background, she began observing the children in the children's houses of Rome. Based on unbiased observations she developed unique materials, a child-centered environment, and was one of the first persons to revolutionize educational thought by stressing respect for the child, freedom of expression, self-education, and training through use of movement and the senses.

7. **WHAT IS IN A MONTESSORI CLASSROOM?**
The Montessori classroom is a child-sized world. Whatever is in the world outside can be incorporated meaningfully in the Montessori classroom. To a child, the world is unmanageable...it is too big, too complex and too confusing. By careful selection of materials by the Directress, an environment is set up that allows the child to explore life on a level he can understand. The materials or exercises are designed to stimulate independent exploration. This prepared environment entices the child to proceed at his own pace from simple activities to more complex ones. Through this process the child's natural curiosity is satisfied and he begins to experience the joy of discovering the world about him. Materials and curriculum center around Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, Geography, Science, Art, Music, Drama and Dance.
8. **HOW DO CHILDREN INTERACT IN THE ENVIRONMENT?**
As the children develop their sense of pride in their "work", a feeling of confidence, well being and joy begins to manifest itself in the child. A "new child" is born. A classroom of Montessori children is a joy to watch. There seems to be a spirit of respect, love, and cooperation among the children that is not found too often.
9. **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MONTESSORI TEACHER?**
The Montessori teacher is called a directress because she facilitates the classroom activity. She carefully plans the environment in the interests of the children and she helps the children progress from one activity to the next. She is trained to deal with each child individually allowing him to choose from many activities within his range of ability. She stands back while a child is working and allows him the satisfaction of his own discovery.
10. **WITH ALL THE FREEDOM, ISN'T THERE CONFUSION?**
The concept of freedom within the classroom is one of freedom within limits. A child is allowed to work freely so long as he does not disturb others. Actually, the children having the freedom to follow their interests are generally happy and busily involved with their work.
11. **WHAT IS THE BEST AGE TO START A CHILD?**
Maria Montessori outlined various periods of "sensitivity". During these times, a child is more capable of and interested in learning specific concepts. At age 2 ½ - 3 ½ a special sense of order, concentration, coordination and independence begin to emerge. This time is ideal to begin a child's training in Montessori as he is at the perfect period to build a strong foundation for future learning.
12. **HOW DO MONTESSORI CHILDREN ADJUST TO PUBLIC SCHOOL?**
Children who have been in a Montessori environment are generally very flexible and adjust quite easily to the public school situation. They are generally better students and spend their time in more productive ways because of their self-direction and positive attitude towards learning.
13. **WHY IS A MONTESSORI EXPERIENCE FOR FIVE DAYS?**
The Montessori classroom experience is for five consecutive days in order to allow the spontaneous learning of the child to flow smoothly. A child taken in and out of school every other day does not have the same opportunity to pursue his unfolding interests.

14. WHAT ABOUT SOCIALIZATION AND GROUP WORK?
Socialization is very much a part of the Montessori method. In the classroom you will notice children interacting continuously, choosing to work on projects together and older children helping younger ones. Each day there is some group activity and play outside.
15. WHO IS THE MONTESSORI METHOD DESIGNED FOR?
The Montessori method is an “approach to learning” and as such has no distinction of class or intelligence. It has been used successfully in all parts of the world and in all types of programs, i.e. Headstart, gifted, mentally retarded, etc.
16. ISN'T MONTESSORI EXPENSIVE?
Tuition in Montessori preschool throughout the country is sometimes higher than other preschools because of the extensive materials, encompassing environment, curriculum and trained staff. It is, however a very reasonable cost in contrast to other activities you would plan for yourself and your child. It becomes a matter of what you value most. To give your child the finest possible experience in his most sensitive years is to give him a strong foundation throughout his life. The child who enjoys learning and becomes self-directed at the critical preschool age will benefit through all his years of learning.
17. DOES MONTESSORI EMPLOY CURRENT RESEARCH AND THEORY IN EDUCATION METHODS?
Montessori is not a static or closed system of education. While there are certain materials and methods that have been proven effective during the years. Montessori is as much an attitude about education and children as it is a specific method.
18. DO YOU ENCOURAGE PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL?
We encourage parent involvement through conferences, observations, discussions, etc. The staff feels that the more parents can understand the experience of the child in the classroom, the better able they are to follow through at home. When parents follow through at home, the child benefits even more because he has a consistent environment in which to grow.
19. WHAT IS THE TRAINING OF THE STAFF?
Each classroom is headed by a directress who has had specific Montessori training from an approved Montessori Training Center. All assistants are selected on the basis of their awareness of the child and dedication to the principles of child development. Interns are in the process of becoming certified Montessori teachers.