



*A community of intellectually curious, independent, and
compassionate lifelong learners*

2021-22

New Family Information

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Cathy Newman, Head of School

Mission

Sunstone Montessori School develops the whole child by providing an academically strong, emotionally nurturing, and socially supportive environment in accordance with AMI guidelines for Montessori education.

Vision

Our vision is a community of intellectually curious, independent, and compassionate lifelong learners.

Commitment to Diversity

Sunstone Montessori School welcomes students and staff of any race, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, color, nationality and ethnicity, religion, and family constellation to all programs and activities at the school. The school does not discriminate in its educational, hiring, admission, or school-administered policies. It is our goal that Sunstone Montessori School reflects the rich diversity of our community, including varied cultures, economic status, and individual or special educational needs.

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New Family Information

Welcome to Sunstone Montessori School! This booklet contains information of particular import to new Sunstone families.

Our Story

Sunstone Montessori School has a rich history of growth, evolution and collaboration with the vibrant Montessori community of Portland, Oregon. Sunstone Montessori was born in 2007 from the successful merger of two well-established Montessori schools, Odyssey Montessori School (ages 6-12 years) and Two Rivers Montessori School (ages 2 ½ to 12 years).

After a long search for a new location that could house the entire school community, Sunstone signed a lease with Portland Public Schools in May 2012 for the former Terwilliger School. In the fall of 2013, we launched our first Toddler class with children 16 months to 3 years. In the fall of 2021 we signed a lease with Our Lady of Sorrows for their former school located in the Woodstock neighborhood of SE Portland. After extensive renovations we moved into our Woodstock home in June of 2021.

Staff

For the 2021-22 school year, our staff consists of AMI trained Guides in every classroom, as well as an AMI-trained Head of School, Program Director, and Communications Manager. Other administrative staff include a Business Manager, an Operations and Development Manager, and one Administrative Assistant. We also have classroom assistants (several AMI trained), two in-house substitutes, and Elementary Aftercare, and a Food Program Director.

Staff members continue their professional development by attending local, regional, and national workshops and conferences, professional in-service days, and staff retreats. Staff members maintain emergency first-aid, CPR, food handlers' certifications, ICCHS (Introduction to Child Care Health and Safety), PBT (Prevention is Better than Treatment), and RRCAN (Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse).

Governance

Sunstone Montessori School is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational organization, governed by a Board of Trustees. Our articles of incorporation and school bylaws are on file in the school office.

Registrations and Affiliations

Our programs are recognized and accredited by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). "Recognized" is the highest level of attainment granted by AMI. We are a member of the Oregon Federation of Independent Schools (OFIS), the North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA), and the Oregon Montessori Association (OMA). Sunstone Montessori School has no religious affiliation.

Oregon Green School

Sunstone has been a certified Oregon Green School since 2009 and achieved “Premier Status” (the highest level) in 2013 through the hard work of staff, children and parent volunteers. We paused our Green Team when the pandemic hit and are hoping to reinstate it this year.. We will be in communication with regard to when and how..

As a Green School, we continuously renew our commitment to sustainability, seeking new ways to reduce our environmental impact, to increase our environmental awareness, and to share what we have learned. Our overall goal is to reduce our impact as a school as much as possible and to inspire others to do the same at home, work and play. The following list is our pre-pandemic Green School efforts. We will continue as many of these as possible under the current pandemic circumstances.

- We may offer monthly Green Team meetings for members of our community to become involved in our initiatives. We will be in communication.
- We have a system for managing and tracking our waste stream (compost, recycling, landfill).
- We perform annual waste audits (done by students and parents) and set goals for each year.
- We collect electronics, light bulbs and batteries for recycling.
- We have taken measures to reduce our water and electricity consumption (installed low-flush toilets, turn lights/computers off when not in use).
- We have a courtyard garden that is used for both education and enjoyment.
- We educate our community about packing “waste-free” lunches by using reusable containers and reducing food waste.
- We use durable, reusable dishes, silverware and cloth napkins in the classroom and at school events.
- We have a sustainable purchasing policy that we adhere to. Whenever we purchase anything for the school, we purchase as sustainably as we can. For example, we use post-consumer recyclable content paper items in our bathrooms, kitchen, offices, and classrooms. We have switched to paperless invoicing for billing and use electronic bill pay for our office needs.
- Staff and children use green cleaning products in the classrooms (our janitorial staff strive to use non-toxic, green products whenever possible).
- We support local businesses and alternative transportation.
- We participate in Walk + Bike month.
- We offer students opportunities to work in the gardens and outdoor spaces on campus.
- We celebrate Earth Day with a variety of activities that demonstrate care for our ecosystem.
- Students volunteer with Portland Parks & Recreation to remove invasive plant species in nearby parks.
- Whenever possible we walk with students to run errands or visit local sites.

Maria Montessori and Montessori Education

Maria Montessori (1876-1952) was a remarkable woman by any standard. Among the first Italian women to earn an M.D., she went on to become an education innovator, a children's advocate, an early feminist and supporter of women's suffrage, an internationally recognized public speaker, the author of numerous books, and a three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. The education approach she founded in 1907 and developed throughout her life is practiced today with tens of thousands of children in hundreds of countries. The organization she founded in 1929, the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), continues to refine and extend her work to this day.

The essence of Montessori philosophy is the recognition, based on observation, of universal human characteristics in children which are revealed, and which will grow and develop, in the right environment and with the right approach. Maria Montessori observed in young children tendencies toward concentration, engagement, exploration of their environment, control of movement, and self-guided learning. She developed an education method that responds to these tendencies, giving children the opportunity to flourish and grow into confident, independent, life-long learners.

Toddler Community

Maria Montessori first developed her method with children between about two and seven years old, and later extended her work to children up to about twelve. In 1947, in Rome, Montessori presented the first Assistants to Infancy training course, and the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) has certified courses at this level since 1982.

Children in our toddler environment focus on toilet independence, social interactions, language development, and practical life activities such as pouring, managing clothing, and preparing snacks. The environment serves children from 16 months, if they have begun walking, to three years. Children may transition to one of our Children's Houses mid-year as their independence develops.

Children's House

Maria Montessori's first classroom was called the 'Casa de Bambini,' or 'Children's House.' Today, Children's Houses worldwide are mixed-age classrooms for children between approximately three and six years old. Montessori observed that these young children are concrete, sensorial learners with a seemingly limitless capacity to absorb and internalize the world around them. The classroom environment is prepared with a wealth of materials and activities to meet this capacity. There are exercises of practical life, from spooning beans to washing tables, which develop concentration, engagement, focus, order, control of movement, and independence. Sensorial materials, such as the pink tower, help children sequence, clarify, and classify information, and to refine their senses by touching, seeing, smelling, tasting, listening to, and exploring their environment. Language and mathematics materials such as the moveable alphabet and the golden beads introduce concepts in a way that makes intuitive sense and invites repetition moving towards deep mastery. Art, geography and music activities spring from the same philosophy, providing for hands-on, open exploration.

Elementary

Maria Montessori observed a change in children around the age of six, and developed the Elementary curriculum specifically for children between the ages of six and twelve years old. Elementary children use their newly developing powers of reason and imagination to explore not only the world they can experience directly, but further, to explore everything that was too long ago or is too small, too big, or too abstract to observe, and to ask big questions such as: “How did it begin? Why? Where is it leading? What is its purpose?” Inspired by the evocative ‘Great Lessons’ from their Guide, students choose and carry out work independently and cooperatively, learning to balance freedom and responsibility as they track their work, set goals, follow their interests, and engage in explorations both inside and outside the classroom. The scope of the Elementary classroom is literally the entire universe, and Montessori students regularly find that their interests and work take them far beyond the public-school curriculum.

And Beyond

Students graduating from Sunstone Montessori School go forth prepared for whatever life may offer them. Academically, they are typically above the level of their traditional school peers. But more central to the Montessori approach is the independence, responsibility, confidence, and character which develop in these children as a result of their Montessori experience. Montessori graduates are seen to have advantages in creativity, positive social interactions, decision-making, and sense of community. These benefits contribute to a life-long sense of personal satisfaction and well-being. Well-known Montessori graduates include the founders of Google, author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Chef Julia Child, [among others](#).

Getting Started at Sunstone

Before School Starts

Forms and Information: Before school starts you will receive online enrollment forms via Transparent Classroom. These forms must be filled out and submitted before your child can attend. The school cannot enroll students without this information.

Please keep this information up to date, so that our records reflect current information and ensure your child’s health and safety. *(See the Transparent Classroom section)*

Preparing Your Child: Young children live in and understand the present moment. For children, approximately six years and younger, the future is a vague concept. Talking too much about beginning “school” can create anxiety and apprehension. You can help prepare your child for this new experience indirectly through activities, such as reading or telling stories about school, practicing bathroom routines, and adjusting sleep and wake-up times during the week or two before school starts.

First Day—First Weeks

Arrival and Drop-Off

Please refer to the “Drop-off & Pick-up” section for specific procedures.

The first day can be an emotional experience for children and parents. Your calm, confident demeanor will reassure your child and help ensure a smooth transition. Feel free to check in with the office later in the morning if you are concerned about your child’s entry into the classroom.

Separation

We ask that you say a quick and loving good-bye to your child at a natural point of separation: in the car at drive through, in the Commons if you walk, bike, take public transit or are tardy, or at the classroom door for AYM families. This makes a clear transition from home to school and discourages your child from clinging to you as you depart. Sometimes, difficulty with separation at drop-off continues past the first few days. Anxiety, ‘clinginess,’ and even tears are not unusual in the first few weeks of school. You can reassure your child that school is a safe, comfortable place, full of friends, caring Guides, and interesting things to do, and that you will be back to pick up at the regular time, just like always. Remember that your child’s Guide is experienced with helping children through these difficulties. If necessary, the Guide or the assistant can physically assist in the transition, giving your child a comforting presence as you make your exit. Children typically stop crying within a few minutes of entering the classroom, and become engaged with their friends and their work. You are always free to check in with the office, or to ask for a call later in the morning to see how your child is doing. If the separation remains difficult for more than a few weeks, please contact your child’s Guide.

Tiredness

The school day, whether it is the morning only or the whole day, is a stimulating experience for young children. It is not unusual to see some extra tiredness at the end of the day during the first few weeks. A nutritious lunch or snack, some quiet time, or even a nap can be helpful to keep the day balanced.

Routine

Most young children respond well to regular, consistent patterns in their lives. The first few weeks of school are a great time to establish and maintain consistent routines around bedtime, getting ready for school, arrival, and pick up. This will help your child feel comfortable with school.

Communication

Because your child’s Guide is focused on helping children begin their days in the classroom, it can be a difficult time for conversations with parents. If you would like to schedule a conversation with the Guide, you may email them directly to set this up. If you need to pass along a time-sensitive message, you may leave a note for the Guide with a staff member at drop-off or in the office. Your child’s Guide will contact you as soon as possible to arrange a meeting or to discuss your issue briefly over the phone.

First Day of School

Toddler Community: New children begin two or three at a time over the course of the first few weeks of the school year. This allows the Guide time to give your child more focused attention during the first days, and helps to smooth your child's adjustment into new routines and new relationships. Sunstone does not make adjustments in tuition for this brief period of "phasing in."

Children's House: Returning Children's House students start on the first day of school

New students in the Children's House begin two or three at a time over the course of the first few weeks of the school year. This allows the Guide time to give your child more focused attention during the first days, and helps to smooth your child's adjustment into new routines and new relationships. Sunstone does not make adjustments in tuition for this brief period of "phasing in."

Elementary: Returning students in their 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th year start on the first day of school. Children new to Sunstone and all Elementary 1st and 4th years start a couple days later, according to the school calendar. (*See "Calendar Highlights" section for exact dates.*) A calm, confident parent, a regular routine, good nutrition, and plenty of rest lay the foundation for a successful experience.

What to Bring

Toddler: Children should bring a change of clothes (including underwear and socks, no media characters please) in a labeled bag, a pair of indoor shoes, and a small ceramic mug for water. Please check with your child's Guide for any variations specific to your child's classroom.

Children's House: Children should bring a change of clothes (including underwear and socks, no media characters please) in a labeled bag, a pair of indoor shoes, and a small ceramic mug for water. Please check with your child's Guide for any variations specific to your child's classroom. Children who stay for lunch should bring a nutritious lunch in a reusable bag or box (no media characters please), with an ice pack if needed. Milk and water are provided at lunch. School supplies are provided as well. Please leave toys and comfort items at home.

Elementary: Children should bring a nutritious lunch in a reusable bag or box (no media characters please) with an ice pack if needed, and a morning snack packed in a separate container. Most school supplies are provided. You might receive a small supplies list from your child's Guide during the summer.

In The Classroom—Lessons and Work

Toddler Community

Children in the Toddler Community explore a range of activities designed to help them develop independence, control of movement, toileting, language, and much more.

Children’s House

Lessons: The basic interaction between the child, the Guide, and the environment in the Montessori classroom is the lesson. Every material, every activity, and nearly every practical or social interaction has a planned or spontaneous lesson associated with it—often more than one. There are lessons in how to use the pink tower, how to have snack, how to walk around someone’s rug, how to do long division with the golden beads, and more. The Guide takes careful note of each child’s development in all areas and strives to present exactly the right lesson at the perfect moment. The actual lesson consists of carefully analyzed, gracefully executed movements showing the essence of the activity being presented. Once your child has had a lesson on a piece of material, he or she is free to take it from the shelf whenever it is available, and to work with it as long as it holds his or her engagement and focus.

At the beginning, new children have not had many lessons, and their choices are limited. They may spend a lot of time observing or learning the basic elements of classroom behavior, such as using quiet voices, controlling movement, having snack, using the bathroom, and respecting the work of other children. Soon enough, they will have lessons and choices of their own.

It is not unusual for children to ask for lessons on material they are not yet ready for. Although the Guides are skilled at navigating these situations, you may hear frustration from your child around lessons he or she would like to have. On the other hand, young children do not always talk very much about the lessons and work they are doing, leaving parents guessing. If you have any questions or concerns about your child’s school day, please feel free to contact your child’s Guide. You may email the Guide directly or you may leave a note for her/him with the front desk. Your child’s Guide will contact you as soon as possible to arrange a meeting or to discuss your issue over the phone.

Work: Children spend their day in the classroom choosing material from the shelves and working with it to their own satisfaction. The right to work without interruption is highly regarded, and you may hear “this is my work” at home from time to time.

Work on paper: Much of the work in the Children’s House is directed towards the child’s inner development and does not create a physical product, such as a piece of paper. Finished work that is ready to come home will be in your child’s cubby or in your family folder at pick-up time. Your child will also have an opportunity to share work with you at the Parent-Child Classroom Sharing events throughout the year.

Understanding your child’s work: Sometimes a piece of work can be difficult to interpret, and often the process has been more important to the child than the final product. You can start a productive conversation by making factual observations and asking questions, such as: “I see you did some work with numbers,” “You used a lot of blue!” or “What can you tell me about this?” These kinds of remarks support your child’s independence and personal growth more effectively than corrections or judgments, even positive judgments, such as “Good job!” or “What a beautiful picture!” which can adversely affect the independence of your child.

Remember that your most important reaction to your child's work can be the special time you devote to sharing it with him. Your gift of time and undivided attention will be most satisfying to your child. If you have questions or concerns about your child's work, please contact the Guide.

Elementary

Lessons: Lessons continue in the Elementary classroom, but they take a new form appropriate for the older child. The stories of the universe, the formation of the earth, the coming of life and of humans, and the achievements of numbers and writing are the subjects of five Great Lessons that are presented every year in the fall. Innumerable related lessons, some in story form, some with materials, and some as demonstrations and experiments proceed from these key lessons, and children choose follow-up work from a limitless range of possibilities.

Work: The work in the Elementary class is likewise an extension and development of the Children's House work, adapted to the needs of the older child. Children will often work in groups on long, involved research projects that may take them beyond the classroom on going-outs into the community. Again, the best way to find out more about your child's work is to ask questions and make observations. Your child will also have the opportunity to share work with you during the Student Presentation Day in the late winter.

Work on paper: In the Elementary, we continue to emphasize process over product. However, as the child moves through his Elementary years, we begin to focus more on quality, depth and presentation. When students transition into our Upper Elementary classroom, more attention is paid to goal setting, deadlines and the development of time management skills. There continues to be a great deal of work on materials that does not always result in a paper product. Additionally, some children are naturally more prolific than others. This does not mean that they do more work than others, but rather that they have more product to show for their efforts. Subsequently, one child in your family might come home at the end of the week with a large stack of written work, while another brings home one piece of paper. As always, discussions with your child, classroom observations, Parent/Guide conferences, and our Elementary Presentation Day will give you insight into your child's development and accomplishments.

Field Trips and ‘Going Out’

Toddler Community

The Toddler Community Children do not go on outings or field trips, except for short walks around the campus.

Children’s House

The Children’s House classrooms do not normally go on outings or field trips. Walking as a group around the campus or neighborhood is enough of a challenge and an excursion for these younger children.

Occasionally, the children who stay in the afternoon may go on an afternoon field trip. Information, including time, date, details of the trip, and driver information, as well as permission slips, will be sent home ahead of time.

Elementary

Going Out: In the Elementary program, children are encouraged to look beyond the classroom for resources and answers to their questions. The classroom is purposefully “limited” to encourage going outside of the classroom. Children may visit the library, a museum, or a local business for additional research materials, or to participate in purchasing supplies from a local shop. These trips, or ‘Going Outs,’ serve as an introduction to the community beyond the classroom and help children develop independence and social skills.

Parents interested in chaperoning or driving are required to attend one of the Going Out orientation/training sessions scheduled at the beginning of the year (see the website calendar for dates). The training is valid for three years.

Local Trips: You may give blanket permission for your child to go on short trips by foot in the neighborhood, accompanied by a parent or staff member, by opting in on the Permissions Form that you receive in your online enrollment packet.

If the entire class is going, children without permission will remain behind in another classroom. Preferably, if a family makes the decision to not give permission to send their child on a whole class trip, the child would remain at home for that day.

Longer Trips: For longer trips, information prepared by the students, including time, date, details of the trip, and driver information, as well as permission slips, will be sent home ahead of time. Children will be secured with seat belts at all times and are not allowed in air bag protected seats.