

Palisades Montessori

A Neighborhood Preschool Since 1984



2021-2022 Primary Program Handbook

Welcome!

Palisades Montessori is part of 100+ years of Montessori tradition in offering children the experience of joyful learning. Our beautiful Primary environment provides activities, materials and lessons that are suitable for the developmental needs and interests of children 2.6 - 6 years old. Individualized learning, appropriate challenges and freedom to choose allow even the youngest children to develop confidence, independence, exploration and creative thinking skills.

An experienced Montessori Teacher and two Assistants will aid children to transition to their new school life with loving, sensitive care. They will give particular support and attention to each child's needs as the children become acclimated to the classroom and new friends. Their day will consist of lessons, work and activities in the classroom, as well as daily exploration and play in the outdoor environment. Our beautiful outdoor area has a natural sand area, gardens, play equipment and a grassy area for running and games.

Children who have reached the age of 30 months are eligible to enroll in Palisades Montessori. Our admissions process prioritizes children who have reached the age of three years (36 months) in September of the admission year. Children do not need to be toilet-trained to enroll; however, ALL children should be out of diapers and using the bathroom independently by the age of 3-1/2.

Contact Information

Palisades Montessori
2828 Hurst Terrace NW
Washington, DC 20016
www.palisadesmontessori.com
Tel (202) 537-6807
Fax (866) 411-5090

To reach the classroom during school hours, call the classroom line: (202) 686-1522. Please note that voicemails left on this line will NOT be monitored. This line is for reaching the classroom only.

Facility Management

Palisades Montessori is licensed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education of the District of Columbia under regulations governing child development centers. The Palisades Montessori adult: student ratio is 1: 8.

Operations and Curriculum

Palisades Montessori operates Mondays through Fridays from September through mid-June annually. Our engaging, three-hour morning program (9:00 AM¹ – 12:00 PM) provides a positive learning experience for children. Palisades Montessori also provides an optional lunch program from

¹ Children may arrive beginning at 8:30 AM. Children are expected to arrive by 9:00 AM daily.

12:00-1:00 PM for all students. Students may attend the lunch program either on Wednesdays only or on all the days that they regularly attend Palisades Montessori. Palisades Montessori also offers extended afternoon programming.

Students with Special Needs

Palisades Montessori does not discriminate on the basis of national origin, race, color, religion or disability in the admission of students, the employment of staff or in the administration of its policies. Children with special needs may enroll at Palisades Montessori if their developmental and social needs can be met with reasonable accommodations and without fundamentally altering the educational and developmental program offered by the school and our staffing capabilities.

Developmental Philosophy: The Primary Montessori Program

The Primary classroom was designed to meet the characteristics and needs of children ages 2.6 - 6 years. Prominent among these are the need for movement, sensorial learning, exploration, relatively effortless learning (especially for language), the need for order and acquisition of the social graces of our culture. In a Montessori classroom, the teacher guides each child to activities and gives lessons appropriate for the child's age and skills. The curriculum, and the classroom, are divided into the following five main areas:

Practical Life:

The practical life exercises aid the child in their first steps of independence in care of self and the environment (home, classroom). They also help the child to develop concentration (focus), control of movements (for both hand and whole body), sequencing, order and attention to detail. The practical life exercises progress from simple activities (such as spooning, pouring, button sewing, washing leaves of a plant) to increasingly more complex ones (table washing, cloth washing, polishing, flower arranging). These exercises are the foundational work for *all* areas of learning as well as aid the child's development of independence and self-confidence.

Sensorial

The Primary child is a sensorial, concrete learner who is in a "sensitive period for the senses," which causes a heightened awareness of the five senses. This not only increases their ability to discriminate the most minute differences and aspects of things in their world, but also intensifies their enjoyment of sound, smells, touch and the qualities of things – especially color, texture, shape and size of objects. Through the manipulation of precise materials, the child is able to continue to perfect coordination of movement and for handwriting (grasp of pencil, strengthening arm and hand coordination). With the sensorial exercises, the child also begins to develop skills for analysis and classification.

The sensorial exercises start with simple, easy to manipulate materials (solid cylinder, pink tower, constructive triangles) and graduate to materials that have more sequencing steps and smaller pieces to handle (trinomial cube, third color box, sound boxes). Memory games and language acquisition are also part of the lessons that the Primary child experiences through the work in this area.

Language

The Montessori classroom is a language-rich environment, intentionally appealing to the “absorbent mind” of the child, which facilitates the easy acquisition of thousands of words along with developing fluency in one or more languages. From the first day to the last, the Primary child is learning the names of the countries of the world, plants, animals, insects, household objects, geometric shapes, foods, etc., as well as the phonetic sounds for the alphabet.

Letter “sound” games and learning the alphabet sounds with sandpaper letters initiate the child onto the path of reading. When a child knows half of the letter sounds, the Moveable Alphabet work begins. The child starts with “writing” short phonetic words, and over time, two- and three-word phrases. This work is direct preparation for the beginning reading lessons. Once solid phonetic reading is achieved, lessons with reading classification, phonograms and “puzzle” (sight) words follow: after which the child begins the function of words (grammar) exercises.

Handwriting is developed through many materials and exercises, with the introduction of writing numbers and letters beginning around the age of four. Creative writing is introduced with the moveable alphabet – first words, then phrases, and finally short stories and brief factual reports.

Spoken language permeates the classroom. Through conversation, pictures, stories, poems and songs, vocabulary and language skills are expanded. Spoken, written and reading language work supports the child’s construction of self and the ability to express needs and thoughts.

Mathematics

The Montessori math material is beautifully precise and concretely represented. The order of lesson presentations leads to a child’s easy understanding of numbers, the decimal system, all four math operations and fractions. Continuing the basic Montessori principle that the child proceeds with a new lesson and materials when they are ready and a skill is mastered, children greatly enjoy mathematics in the Primary classroom!

Number rods and sandpaper numbers begin the zero to ten number exercises, followed by teen beads and the counting chains, which facilitate counting up to 1000. The golden bead material introduces the decimal system work and the math operations. A variety of exercises facilitate the child’s acquisition of math facts. The older Primary child will have the opportunity to work with fractions and exercises that explore thousands and millions, and support the abstraction of math concepts.

Cultural

The Cultural Exercises involve extensive lessons with geography, in particular, as well as art, music and biology. Science and history are simple activities that are appropriate to the sensorial Primary learner who has not yet developed the ability to think abstractly or visualize life and societies of past history. In the Primary years, the child will be able to identify and know the names of most of the countries from the colorful puzzle continent maps. Social studies increases children’s knowledge not only of their own environment, but also of the environments of other peoples and places.

Art is a vital and constant element in the Primary class. Work with a variety of media is done throughout the year. Additionally, the children have the opportunity to illustrate their language and math papers with creative designs or pictures. Singing, music, movement activities, musical

instrument playing and lessons with the bells are all an integral part of class life at Palisades Montessori.

Clothing and Supplies

Daily Items for School

- Backpack: large enough to hold a spare set of clothes and a pair of shoes (when boots are worn to school on rainy and snowy weather days) – but not too large for the child. No wheels, please!
- Closed-toe shoes with Velcro closures – until your child can capably tie shoelaces. Please, no Crocs, flip-flops or other loose-fitting sandals as these can be hazardous during outdoor play.
- A large Ziploc bag with a spare set of clothes: Socks, underwear, shirt and pants. This will be considered the “emergency” supply and kept at school.
- A second large Ziploc bag with a spare set of clothes: Socks, underwear, shirt and pants. These should remain in the child’s backpack every day.
- If needed, a large Ziploc bag with five diapers and a small quantity of wipes. No pull-ups, please! These items should be in the child’s backpack every day and replaced, by a parent or caregiver, as they are used.
- Extra face masks for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

All required forms need to be submitted to the office before your child starts school, including any medication and its required authorization form from the doctor. Physical and dental examination forms must be within one year of the date of the exam, and must be signed by your providers. Your child may not attend school without all forms having been submitted. No exceptions will be made to this rule for any reason or at any time. All forms must be submitted on paper. Please do not email your forms to the school.

Typical Daily Schedule

A typical daily schedule at Palisades Montessori includes individual and group activities or lessons, as well as a daily time outdoors.

- 8:30-9:00: Morning Arrival
 - Children are greeted and helped to settle into the start of their morning
- 9:00-11:10: Morning Work Period
 - The children will take turns eating snack throughout the morning, and water is always available to the children.
- 11:00-11:15: Story reading, poetry, singing, creative movement or storytelling with all the children
- 11:15-12:00: Children go outside for play and physical activity
- 12:00: Dismissal for children with a half-day schedule
- 12:00-1:00: Lunch hour for children who are enrolled in this (optional) hour of the school day
- 1:00: Dismissal for children attending the lunch hour
- 1:00-3:00: Extended Day Program (includes nap/rest)

- 3:00: Dismissal for Extended Day children

Arrival and Dismissal Plan

Please read the arrival and dismissal plan carefully. Non-compliance could result in dismissal of your child from our school and/or suspension of our permit to operate.

On time arrivals are critical to a child's sense of order! Quick, brief "good-byes" are easiest on the child's emotions and transition into the classroom. A consistent farewell routine is also helpful.

Arrival for parents who are driving to school:

NOTE: During the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not offer a car pool. All parents must park legally/safely and walk students to the gathering area. Please DO NOT block the driveway with your car.

- At no time can there be more than three cars in front of the property. If there are three cars already present, you must continue down Hurst Terrace and go around the block.
- Please remain in your car at all times. One of our teachers will open the door and receive your child, including unbuckling car seat belts.
- Please place your child's car seat on the side of the car closest to our property. Children may not exit on the street side.
- For safety reasons, keep your child in the car seat until greeted by staff. Please wait your turn in line, if there is a line.
- After you have dropped off your child, **do not execute a three-point or U-turn**. Proceed straight down the street. We cannot emphasize enough the seriousness of our "no U-turn" policy. Hurst Terrace is a busy street with traffic from Key School. No U-turns!
- At no time may you block any other driveway with your car.
- If you are late, please park legally, walk your child to school and use the side door. You will need to call the classroom phone [see above note on the first page] to alert the staff of your arrival so that they may unlock the gate.

Arrival for parents who are walking to school

- Parents who are walking to school will meet the one of our staff members at the driveway and the staff member will then escort the children to the classroom.
- When you are crossing the street, you must cross using the curb-cut directly opposite the school's property – do not jaywalk or execute long diagonals down busy Hurst Terrace.
- Strollers are welcome and may be left during the morning on the driveway near the garage.
- Parents must drop off children in the driveway assembly area. Our pathway is too steep and our entryway too narrow to accommodate parents/caregivers walking children into the classroom.

Dismissal

- Dismissal will be handled in the same manner as above.
- Please line up no sooner than 11:50 AM and remain in your cars – or, park legally and walk to the driveway area
- Children will be brought out to meet you.
- Please stand in the driveway area, not in the street. Children are very excited to see you each day and as they run into your arms, we want to make sure they never go into the street.
- If you need to pick up your child early, please inform a staff member with a written note, and park legally. Avoid giving staff VERBAL communications to ensure that your message is accurately given and followed.

Please make sure that all caregivers are aware of this plan. **If you arrive late (or early), walk to the garden gate, which will be locked, and call the classroom phone.**

Late Pick-Ups

Late pick-up is an exceptional occurrence and not a normal program option. Fees for late pick up are due upon receipt and are assessed as follows: \$10.00 for the first ten minutes, \$2.00 for every additional minute.

Releases

Children will only be dismissed to their parents or another adult on the approved caregiver list. If your child is going home with a friend or relative who is not on the approved caregiver list, please notify the office in advance by email, or written note handed to the Lead Teacher.

Snow Policy

Palisades Montessori takes its cues from the District of Columbia Public Schools and/or the Office of the Mayor and/or the Office of Personnel Management regarding bad weather and natural emergencies, but we occasionally also make our own independent decisions – please monitor your text, email and phone during times of inclement weather or emergencies. Palisades parents will be emailed by 6:00 AM to inform if the school will be OPEN, DELAYED or CLOSED.

Parent Participation and Access²

Parent Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are formally scheduled twice per year, around the beginning of November and March.

Contacting Teachers

Your child's teacher will always be available to discuss any aspect of a child's school experience. You can contact Shannon Neal by email at shannon@palisadesmontessori.com. You can anticipate a prompt response to your inquiries within our business hours on weekdays. Note that teachers' office hours are in the early afternoon, after the school day has concluded.

² Parent participation in person, in the classroom, is presently not possible due to COVID-19. We hope to resume these activities in the near future!

Parent Observations

We hope that every parent will set aside time in their schedule for an Observation Morning. These visits can be as short as a half-hour or as long as all morning. Generally, observations are done after the first six weeks of school, to allow the children to settle comfortably into school life.

Parent Helpers in Class

We frequently invite parents and special friends into the classroom to help with special holiday projects, for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day. Stay tuned to your email for these invitations!

Disclosure of Information

Personal, family and enrollment information will be kept for at least three years after your child leaves Palisades Montessori. Automatic access will be allowed for teachers, administrators, assistants and OSSE/District of Columbia. Written permission by a parent or legal guardian is required to allow access to anyone else.

Referrals

Part of a teacher's responsibility is to observe and assess the progress of the child. When there is an area of concern about the child's progress, development or behavior, Palisades Montessori will schedule a conference with the child's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) to share the concern(s) and observations. If one of the steps to address the concern is a referral to a specialist or to the Early Stages program of DCPS, it is understood that all results from the referral, screening or evaluations will be shared with the teacher, in order to best serve the needs of the child.

Transportation

Children in Palisades Montessori never participate in offsite field trips by car, bus or van. The only offsite field trip would be a supervised walks around the neighborhood to visit nearby playgrounds or storefronts, for the purpose of learning about the community. Students will not be permitted to participate in neighborhood walks without a signed permission slip via the Palisades Montessori enrollment contract. It is expected that ALL students will have a signed form to allow for all the children to enjoy these wonderful experiences. Please contact Heather Gustafson with any concerns about submitting a signed release.

Tuition, Withdrawal and Reenrollment of Children

Please refer to your enrollment contract for details regarding tuition and withdrawal policies.

Re-enrollment for returning children occurs annually each year between early January and early February. At the time of re-enrollment, a non-refundable tuition deposit of \$1,000 is due to reserve a space in the class for the coming year, as well as a binding enrollment contract subject to the tuition and withdrawal policies of Palisades Montessori.

Personal Care: Clothing, Toileting

Clothing

When dressing your child for school, keep the following in mind:

- During the school day, there are both indoor and outdoor activities, where clothing may become wet, dirty or stained. Children should wear clothing that allows them to move easily and comfortably.
- Please avoid having your child wear special clothing or other items that would cause distress if damaged or lost.
- We encourage independence with regard to potty training. Dress your children in clothing that allows them to build independence. Snaps, buttons and zippers on pants generally discourage independence in the toilet, whereas elastic waistbands provide the child with more ease to manage clothing in the bathroom.
- Jeans and tight pants are particularly challenging for young children, both in ease of comfortable movement and self-care for bathroom needs.
- Children must wear closed-toe shoes. No exceptions. KEEN sandals with the closed/covered toe are acceptable – Crocs are not! No slip-ons.
- All clothing and personal items need to be labeled.
- A change of clothes should be brought to school each day in the child's backpack, in addition to the spare set that remains at school. When a set is returned to be washed, do your best to return a clean set the next day.
- Send your child with boots on rainy days, and full snow gear on snowy days.

Toy Policy

We ask that children leave all personal items, especially toys and stuffed animals, at home. We cannot be responsible for personal items that are lost or damaged.

Outdoor Fun

Palisades Montessori children go outside in all kinds of weather - dress your child appropriately! For the cold winter months, children need a pair of mittens and a hat every day. If there is snow on the ground, children will not be permitted to go outdoors unless they have snow pants and snow boots as well.

Meals and Snacks

We provide a morning snack. It is the parent's responsibility to fully inform us of allergies and the conditions that we must observe to keep our child safe. Palisades Montessori will advise the families of any food restrictions for occasions when a special shared snack comes to school, such as on birthdays.

Holidays³

Birthdays: Birthdays are *very* special and we look forward to celebrating them with the class. We will discuss with you how birthdays are celebrated and the ways you can contribute to your child's

³ Parent participation in person, in the classroom, is presently not possible due to COVID-19. We hope to resume these activities in the near future!

special celebration. Birthday celebrations are for the class children only. For out-of-school birthday parties, we ask that you use your copy of the school mailing list to distribute invitations and thank-you cards. We do not celebrate “summer” birthdays as this is too confusing for very young children.

Halloween: We celebrate Halloween with a morning of crafts and seasonal fun. No costumes, please!

Thanksgiving: The children will enjoy Thanksgiving with a seasonal feast and holiday activities on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day. Information about the feast and help with food donations will be sent to families a couple of weeks beforehand.

Mid-Winter Holidays: Our multicultural student body celebrates many different holidays. We try to expose the children to a wide range of cultural traditions. On the last school day before the winter break, the children will perform a short holiday program for parents, and information about this event will be provided in mid-December.

Valentine’s Day: In addition to enjoying many special activities, the children will have an exchange of Valentine’s Day cards. Review the following details as you prepare cards with your child:

- Send enough Valentine cards for each child in the class (this count will be provided later)
- Envelopes should not be “addressed” to a certain child (no names written on envelopes)
- Do help your child write his/her name on the card
- Cards only – candy or other special items should not be included

Visiting Mornings: In early winter, we invite the children’s parents, primary caregivers or special family member or friend to visit the classroom. In order to not overwhelm the size of our space, we provide two such Visiting Mornings. Please make sure to mark these special days in your calendars!

School Picnic: We celebrate the end of school with a picnic potluck, games and fun and hope that the entire family will be able to join.

Health and Safety Policies

Illness Policy

Palisades Montessori's health and wellness guidelines are as follows: Students with any of the following conditions must be kept home. Students will be sent home to rest and recover if these conditions become apparent during the school day:

- Fever of 100°F or higher
- Congestion or runny nose
- Vomiting or nausea
- Skin rash or eruptions of unknown origin
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue, muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea

- Drainage from the eyes
- Painful sore throat
- Parasites (nits, lice, etc.)
- Communicable diseases (chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, etc.)

Students may also be sent home to rest and recover if and when Palisades Montessori believes, in its sole judgment, that the student's condition poses a threat to the health or safety of the student, or other students, or staff in the program.

A student who becomes ill at school will be separated from the group for rest, recover and control of contagion. The parent(s) and/or emergency contact(s) will be called. Ill students must be picked up within one hour after being notified of the illness. After one hour, the family account will be charged an additional \$15.00 per hour (or part thereof) related to the cost of providing isolated care.

NOTE: Students must be fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever-controlling medications before returning to school.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Parent Handbook has been amended; [please click to view this important amendment](#).

First Aid

Bumps and bruises are a normal part of childhood. If a child is injured, the parents will receive a report stating the circumstances and treatment. If treatment beyond washing, applying a Band-Aid, and giving a hug is required, the parent will be called. In an emergency, 911 will be called first, and then the parents. A staff member will be with the child until the parent/guardian arrives.

Medication

To give medication to your child, we must have a signed medication consent form, which was included in your admission packet. NEVER send medication, whether prescribed or over the counter, to school unless accompanied by the required health forms. Medications, including cough drops, should never be in a child's backpack or in their possession at any time.

Discipline Policy

Appropriate behavior is elicited in a positive and clear way. A child who demonstrates inappropriate behavior will be reminded how to behave, and expected behavior described, and if necessary, appropriate consequences for not adjusting behavior. If the behavior continues, there are different steps that the teacher will use, depending on the individual child (such as age, time in the classroom, special or developmental considerations, etc.). Simple steps will be used first (such as a suggestion to become involved in work, move to another table, or stay with the teacher or assistant for a brief period of time), and at times, as necessary, other steps will follow (required to work at specific table or area for most of the morning, stay with the teacher until dismissal, removal of privileges to join a class activity).

It is recognized that young children need time to develop awareness of socially inappropriate behavior and to change behavior that is hurtful to self or others. If problems persist despite the efforts by the staff to affect a change, parents will be asked to attend a conference to discuss the

behavior issues and possible next steps.

Emergency Contingency Plan and Fire Drills

Palisades Montessori will conduct regular fire drills on a monthly basis. The children are simply told that it is a drill, so as not to raise unnecessary fear or attention on “fire.” Upon discovery or notification of a fire, all staff and students will immediately be notified and will proceed to evacuate the building. A floor plan detailing fire equipment and evacuation routes is posted in the classroom and reviewed annually by District of Columbia Fire Safety inspectors. The staff shall assist and direct students in evacuating the building and then proceed directly to the assembly area located across the street at Key Elementary School. Students will assemble on Key Elementary School’s blacktop play area in fair weather and inside the gymnasium in poor weather. A headcount will be taken to ensure the safety of all students and staff. A staff member shall call 911 to alert the fire department from a safe location. Staff will then notify students’ parents/guardians.

Pets

Many of the children greatly enjoy the class goldfish. They often observe and participate in feeding. The Gustafson Family, who occupy the attached residence, own a cat whose veterinary certificate is on file at the school. The cat, “Littlejohn,” is a friendly Maine Coon cat who may encounter children on the playground in the classroom and is a hypo-allergenic breed.

Reporting of Unusual Incidents

Palisades Montessori is required to report any unusual incidents that may occur during our normal operations including, but not limited to:

- Death of a person occurring within the Facility
- Injury to, or illness of, any child that occurs during the hours the child is enrolled in care and that requires hospitalization or emergency medical treatment
- Damage to the Facility, or to any Facility equipment, that interferes with the capability of the Facility to protect the health, safety and well-being of the children and adults in the Facility
- The presence of any individual in the Facility who has, or is suspected of having, a communicable disease that must be reported to the District of Columbia Department of Health in accordance with Title 22 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations
- Any circumstances under which a child is deemed missing or unaccounted for
- Any other occurrence at the Facility that involves a response by police, fire, ambulance, or any other emergency service
- Child Abuse laws require that anyone who suspects a child is being abused to report the matter to the Police.

Grievance Procedures

Palisades Montessori is a community-based organization and we welcome collaboration with our families. Should you at any time have questions or concerns about your child’s experience in our school, please inform the office immediately.

- Questions related to tuition, schedules, arrival/dismissal policies, and other institutional matters should be directed to the school office at (202) 537-6807.
- Questions related to curriculum, discipline, classrooms schedules, parent events, and parent conferences should be directed to the Director.

Suspension or Termination Policy

Palisades Montessori may temporarily or permanently terminate any student's enrollment as follows:

Upon two weeks' notice:

- Failure to abide by school policies.
- School's program is not meeting the developmental or special needs of the student as determined by the school administration, in its sole and absolute discretion.
- Account is past due for seven days; and/or a pattern of disregard of tuition policies.
- Persistent pattern of late pick-up as determined by the school administration, in its sole and absolute discretion.
- Persistent pattern of failure to abide by the communication guidelines between parents and staff as set forth in the Parent Handbook.

Immediate suspension or termination without prior warning:

- The student's behavior or conduct is threatening or abusive to the mental or physical well-being or health of one or more of the other students, staff, or other persons at Palisades Montessori, and the school administration is unable to reasonably eliminate the threat.
- The parent's or guardian's behavior or conduct is threatening or abusive to the mental or physical well-being or health of one or more of the students, staff, or other persons at Palisades Montessori. Grounds for immediate termination within this clause include verbal abuse of students, staff, or other persons at Palisades Montessori. Examples of verbal abuse include, but are not limited to, use of profanity, loud talking, verbal intimidation, and/or making physical threats, on the phone, by email, or in person, to one or more of the students, staff, or other persons at Palisades Montessori.

Notices

Palisades Montessori will do our best to communicate in timely and clear manner information and announcements about school events, activities, etc., and expect that parents will read them in a timely and attentive manner.