



**THE RED OAKS
SCHOOL**

PARENT CURRICULUM GUIDE

**2019-2020 Early Childhood Program
(Ages 3-6)**

Early Childhood at The Red Oaks School

The three-year Early Childhood curriculum is predicated on the belief that three- to six-year-olds have an incredible capacity to learn and accomplish and are capable of astonishing things that go well beyond common expectations. Our classrooms are multi-age allowing each student to progress at his/her optimal pace. There is a decided emphasis on igniting the natural enjoyment of learning. Students leave the Early Childhood program skilled, relaxed, and confident in their abilities.

The course of study is based on Montessori principles, using ingeniously designed hands-on materials, specific to the Montessori method, that are self-correcting and sequentially presented to each student individually. Self-correcting materials are those that can be “checked” and therefore completed independently by the student. For example, if there is an extra piece of a material left unused, the student is able to determine that a correction is needed and can continue to work with that material until mastery is achieved without waiting for teacher intervention. This builds confidence and allows each student to progress at his/her own pace. Classroom environments are designed to encourage independence. They are carefully planned, prepared, and maintained to ensure that students have materials available to challenge them as they progress through carefully sequenced activities and experiences.

Typically, children choose their work from the materials their teachers have prepared for them and have made available on the shelves of the classroom. Teachers may help guide student choice as a result of the observations and notes collected with regard to each individual student’s progress and work habits. In addition to developing solid academic skills, children learn about other cultures and the world around them. Music, Art, World Languages, and Physical Education are all important elements of the program.

Specific Areas of Study:

Practical Life

The term “Practical Life” is used to describe activities in the Montessori classroom which enable young children to perform simple everyday tasks for themselves. The key purpose of the Practical Life area is to facilitate growth in independence, concentration, and coordination. Materials and activities empower children to care for themselves and their surroundings. Materials are aesthetically pleasing and are designed to promote the development and growth of fine and gross motor skills, control of movement and hand-eye coordination. Many of these activities have additional subtle purposes as well. For example, materials are often arranged and used in a “left to right” and “top to bottom” pattern in an effort to indirectly prepare students for reading and writing, while small grains used in a transferring activity require students to exercise the same pincer grip later used to correctly hold a pencil.



On any given day, students can be seen buttoning, snapping, zipping, and buckling specially designed frames as they practice the skills needed to dress. Others may be observed pouring water from various sized vessels, transferring spoons of rice between bowls, tweezing and arranging small items, grasping objects with tongs, or washing tables with sudsy sponges as they learn how to handle real utensils used in everyday life.



“Grace and Courtesy” lessons are those activities that help students develop a sense of classroom citizenship. Teachers model positive and appropriate social skills both formally and informally throughout the day. They can be seen role-playing how a child might resolve conflict, appropriately interrupt a conversation, or greet classmates upon arrival. The consistent use of respectful language such as “please” and “thank you” is an integral part of daily classroom life. In addition, teachers spend time giving lessons on walking carefully, carrying objects, and moving gracefully in the classroom. Our snack routine is an example where you can see grace and courtesy in action.

Sensorial

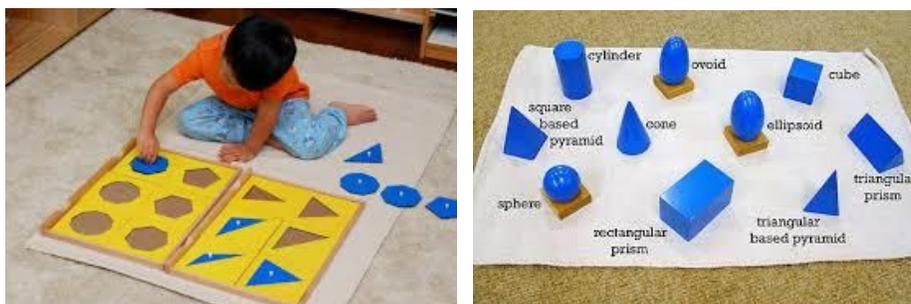
The Sensorial materials in a Montessori classroom are designed specifically to hone the senses, enabling children to discriminate subtle differences. This type of discrimination prepares students to approach, analyze, and problem solve. It is the bedrock of mathematical thinking and logical reasoning.

Each activity isolates a specific sense and encourages practice and precision. Visual discrimination is sharpened as a student deliberately builds a prescribed pattern with wooden rods that vary only in length. Precision is required to match and then organize barely distinguishable shades of color on tablets designed for this purpose alone. Auditory discrimination is challenged when students are required to match and order cylinders that emit a variety of sounds and tones.



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In addition to honing the student's use of his/her senses, the Sensorial materials provide countless opportunities for teachers to both model and present, in formal lessons, a rich vocabulary that students can later use to describe or explain relationships ("long, longer, longest," "heavy, heavier, heaviest"). Teachers play games, asking students to retrieve the "heaviest" or "lightest" cube. Students trace, observe, and use accurate nomenclature like "sphere" and "trapezoid" when working with polygons and 3D solids designed for the Sensorial area of the classroom.



The students are constantly exposed to concrete examples of the concepts they will later need to be able to understand in the abstract. The "longest side" of a triangle they trace may later become a "hypotenuse" on the page in front of them. The terms "similar" and "different" will be far from new as they remember how they searched through a stack of fabrics for two identical swatches. Honing the senses equips students to make sense of their immediate surroundings and gives them the tools for future learning and the language to express ideas in precise and accurate terms.

Language

The ROS Montessori Language curriculum addresses both expressive and receptive language skills. Rich spoken language is modeled and practiced and students progress through carefully planned activities as they prepare to read and write fluently. Teachers read rich literature and maintain a "print-rich" environment as a nod to Montessori's belief that many young children can read early and well.

The Montessori Language materials are sequential and presented to children individually as soon as they have the necessary preceding skills. A student's journey to fluency begins with multi-sensory materials designed to reinforce the sound/symbol relationship. Students trace sandpaper alphabetic symbols and practice pronouncing the correlating sounds. Lower case letters are used in an effort to expose students to those symbols most common in reading experiences. Associating sounds to those symbols rather than letter names allows for a quick and natural pathway to writing and reading.

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Students arrange the alphabetic symbols of a “moveable alphabet” to form words. This encoding or “writing” with specially designed letters allows students to compose words and sentences without having to master the use of a pencil prior to doing so. This construction of language leads seamlessly to the blending of sounds needed for reading or “decoding.”

Simultaneously, students prepare to write; practicing their pencil grip and the strokes necessary for proper letter formation, employing left-right and top to bottom patterns. For example, they feel the sandpaper letters using their tactile sense, and they trace the geometric shapes of the metal inserts. They may trace letters in sand or in water and practice placing symbols appropriately on lines to solidify correct placement.

While the students continue to practice letter formation and placement, they are introduced to the Red Oaks Writing program. It draws various ideas from *Write from the Beginning*, a developmental writing program that employs *Thinking Maps*. The activities encourage students to expand, organize and illustrate their thoughts through the drawing of detailed pictures. After achieving some mastery of letter formation, the student is introduced to the concept of a word and then a sentence. As the writing progresses, the use of inventive (phonetic) spelling is common and age-appropriate.

Thinking Maps are tools that help students organize their thoughts, categorize, compare and contrast, sequence, and select pertinent facts from all of the information they have collected about a particular subject.

Throughout this entire process, teachers initiate oral language games to reinforce sound/symbol relationships as well as build the phonemic awareness needed to both decipher and construct words. For instance, a teacher will often gather a small group of children asking them to deconstruct the sounds of various items collected on a tray.

Once a student is able to read various phonetic word families, he/she is then introduced to phonograms like “th” and “sh,” blends, and various vowel combinations using similar multi-sensory materials. Concepts continue to be presented individually as each student is ready.

Students practice reading short and long vowel books and sight words. In addition, they work on reading comprehension and answering simple questions pertaining to the story.

The ROS student's journey through the acquisition of language is deliberate and individualized. The materials are constantly adjusted to meet the needs of each individual student.

Math

The Math materials in the Montessori classroom are carefully designed to both represent concepts and encourage needed repetition and practice. The materials are presented to students individually as each student masters the prerequisites necessary for success. The materials are presented in a sequential manner and each experience builds upon prior learning.

Each classroom is equipped with materials that reach far beyond common early childhood expectations. Each piece of material serves a specific purpose and demonstrates a specific concept of skill. Maria Montessori believed that allowing students to touch, count, build, and solve in a concrete manner enabled them to understand mathematical concepts typically reserved for older students.

Students typically begin their journey perfecting one-to-one correspondence, counting materials that encourage accuracy and perseverance. Because the materials are self-correcting, students can count and recount until their process is precise and accurate. Students "feel" ten before they learn to recognize the symbol that represents ten. This type of concrete experience enables students to accurately estimate and reason logically as they progress. As students count and group wooden spindles, the idea of a quantity being a "set" or a "collection of ones" facilitates deep and lasting understanding.

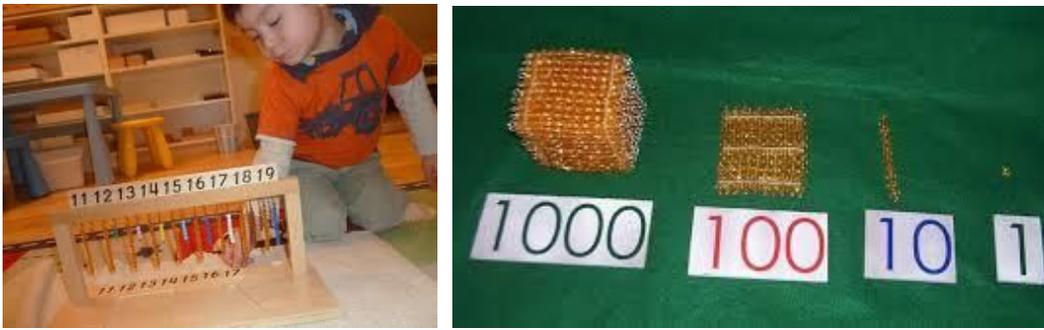


Soon after a student has a firm understanding of quantities and an accurate method of determining quantities, symbols are introduced. The materials used to introduce numerals are the same multi-sensory materials employed to introduce the alphabetic symbols. Sandpaper numbers are traced and students can be heard and seen rehearsing and ordering them in a variety of games and activities. They practice correct stroke formation in the same manner in

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which they practiced their alphabetic symbols. Numbers are treated as a language and teachers model mathematical verbiage and thinking throughout the day.

The deliberate joining of symbols and quantities after both have been mastered separately ensures a true understanding of concepts beyond rote verbalization. Students can be seen counting and matching quantities to symbols using a wide variety of materials specifically prepared for this purpose. They “build” or compose quantities with materials designed to emphasize a number’s composition. For example, bars of ten beads joined together are used when building teens to show the unique relationship teens have with the number ten. The student literally “sees” twelve as “10 and 2.” In deference to Montessori’s commitment to both engage and challenge students, counting materials reach beyond the numbers 1-10 into the teens and beyond. Students have opportunities to employ beaded materials that demonstrate place value into the thousands.



Operational functions are demonstrated with both large and small quantities to emphasize the idea that “addition is joining” and “subtraction is taking away or separating.” For example, you may see students counting single beads, bars of ten beads, squares of one hundred beads and cubes made of 1,000 beads in an effort to determine a sum after joining two piles of “golden bead” material with a friend on a rug. Cards designed to construct numerals well into the thousands are used to show quantities.

Students prepare for multiplication when they count specially designed chains made of bars of beads. You will hear students counting by five, “five, ten, etc.” as they lay their hands on each bar of five beads. This kind of concrete preparation for later application is a hallmark of Montessori math programs.



Cultural Studies

At the Primary level, we have a two-pronged approach to the cultural curriculum – Science and Geography. The purpose of this area is to connect the children to the world around them, encourage their natural curiosity, help them develop essential thinking and learning skills, and guide them on their way to becoming stewards of the environment and responsible global citizens.

Science

The purpose of the science curriculum is to arouse the children’s imagination and curiosity and to teach them to question the world around them. Students develop critical thinking skills such as recognizing the importance of the parts to the whole, sequencing, classifying and comparing and contrasting. They apply these learned skills in various situations – all of which help develop an independent learner/thinker. Through experimentation children learn to question, observe, predict, and problem solve, all of which introduces them to the scientific method. The students’ grasp of concepts and their abilities are assessed through observation during activities and discussions following the activity.

The Science curriculum aims to capitalize on the children’s sense of wonder and natural curiosity about nature and animals. This is done through the introduction to basic botany and zoology. First, the children are introduced to the “big picture” in a very concrete, multisensory manner. The concepts are presented through the various activities on the science shelves and reinforced in other areas of the classroom when appropriate. Gradually, teachers start to narrow it down and focus on certain aspects of the big picture. The activities are designed with the multi age group in mind. The activities progressively build in complexity according to the children’s growing abilities.

The following concepts are introduced through the Primary cycle: the four elements (land, air, water, fire); classification of living and non-living things; classification of living things into plants or animals; life cycle of plants; life cycle of animals; classification of animals into vertebrate or invertebrate; classification of vertebrates into their five groups (fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals).

Geography

The purpose of the Geography curriculum is to help children, at an early age, gain a sense of their place in the world. They learn that people all around the world have the same basic needs: food, shelter, language, clothing, transportation, and currency. The manner in which people fulfill these needs depends on where they live and what they have available. The curriculum starts with the “big picture.” Earth is made of land (continents) and water (oceans). In the fall, we start with North America, the continent on which we live. The children are introduced to its location, the names of some of the countries, and its animals. Throughout the

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unit, the children develop and employ many essential skills in a series of varied activities. The material is introduced to the children in a very concrete, multisensory and sequential manner. It is presented in various degrees of complexity matching their abilities.

The rest of the continents are introduced over the course of the school year. The unit on each continent follows a similar sequence of topics and activities covered in the North America unit. The children are encouraged to make connections and determine differences and similarities. The purpose, again, is to impress on the children that we all have the same basic needs even though we might go about fulfilling them in different ways.

The Geography curriculum lays the foundation for global citizens who have respect and empathy for their fellow man, wherever he lives. Our community service projects are closely linked to the units we cover in the curriculum. Through these projects the children become aware that in our society, as well as in other countries, not everyone is able to fulfill their basic needs adequately. Some of the projects are locally based, while others are tied to the continents we study. In either case, the children experience the joy of giving.



Spanish

In the Primary level the students are introduced to Spanish following the Syntalk Method. Using self-explanatory symbol cards, the students learn to speak before they start to read and write. They feel immediately empowered and can, from the start, articulate useful and relevant sentences, for example: "Rosa eats a cake, Rosa plays with the dog," etc.

The colorful symbol cards allow them:

- oral proficiency, learning to pronounce the words correctly
- vocabulary build up and memorization

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- awareness of subject-verb-object sentence structure sequence.

Each class is divided into three parts:

- Greeting song/conversation: Students are greeted with a song. The students will then engage in basic conversation with the teacher on topics that include proper greeting, weather, name and age, among others.
- Symtalk method cards: The cards will be used to make and “read” sentences, building and expanding the vocabulary, learning and using correct sentence structure.
- Song/ movement (3/4 year olds): Students will learn songs in Spanish relating to a variety of themes.

Activity book: The Kindergartners will work on the Symtalk *Mis Amigos y Yo Level 2* which will reinforce the material learned with the Symtalk cards. They will start reading and writing, identifying the vocabulary from a word bank. The Kindergartners learn colors and are introduced to noun and adjective agreement.

This year, our central point will be Spain. We will focus on learning about this country through cultural lessons, songs, books, traditional stories and dance.

Art

Art is one way students at ROS can explore differences and similarities in cultures, traditions, and philosophies. Our integrated approach extends from the classroom Cultural Studies and allows children to relate to and create works that echo the very peoples and places they are learning about in class.

Through the fine arts program at Red Oaks, the students participate in a vigorous study of the arts which is comprised of the following components:

- Art production – Involves critical thinking and imaginative processes, and the expression of the heart, mind and hand.
- Art history - An examination of art and artists and their contributions to society. We ask the questions: “Why was art created?” “How was it used?” “What is the purpose?”
- Art criticism and aesthetics - Involves the students responding to, interpreting and then applying critical thinking to their own art and the work of others. We ask the questions: “What was the artist trying to say?” “How did you come to that conclusion?” “How can the art be changed?”

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The 2018-2019 Primary art curriculum will explore the basics of creative thinking and fundamental skills and techniques that are foundational in these early developmental stages. The art curriculum encourages students through experimental and guided learning opportunities and through an exploratory use of materials. Beginning with the basics, students learn the importance of line, color, and shape in art and will conduct a series of multimedia projects that draw inspiration from the world around them.

Music

Music at ROS is both expressive and explorative. Students consider music from a wide variety of sources in an effort to understand and foster respect for cultures extending far beyond their experiences. Simultaneously, students learn fundamental skills to engender confidence and creative spirits. Students' early musical experiences help to set the stage for the perseverance needed for later study and practice.

There are three principles that guide the Music Program at The Red Oaks School:

- Children respond intuitively to rhythm and melody.
- Musical sounds are created by musical actions upon an instrument.
- Musical concepts are discussed only after they have been experienced.

The Primary Music program consists of a carefully prepared series of experiences. Through these activities, children explore many elements of music, such as rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, and form. Primary Music classes address the application of skills that are still being developed. Musically, students learn to match pitch, follow beat, and respond to musical cues. Additionally, they increase their attention spans, improve their motor skills, and practice appropriate socialization. Throughout the year, lessons and activities will foster the development of the three artistic processes: creating, performing, and responding.

Music & Movement

In the Music and Movement program, children engage in activities to develop strength, motor control, and creativity. They move in many ways that encourage them to support their trunk and maintain balance. They navigate shared space, moving around obstacles and responding to changes in their environment. Music helps to promote motor planning and the organization of movement sequences in children. Additionally, Music and Movement provides a fun, safe environment for children that promotes brain development necessary for future academic pursuits.

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Lesson activities include:

- *Manipulatives:* Using bean bags and balls of various weights and textures teaches children that they can adapt their movements. They learn to plan their motor activity and predict outcomes. Visually tracking the objects fosters eye-hand coordination.
- *Locomotion:* These activities give children opportunities to practice navigating through shared space, moving from one place to another. They learn to coordinate the different parts of their bodies to move in a smooth and controlled manner. They improve their ability to stop suddenly or to change directions.
- *Balance:* Feeling unbalanced can cause us to feel anxious and distract us from other tasks. Walking on a balance beam or standing on one foot can help children feel more confident as movers and reduce the risk of injury.
- *Dance:* Dance teaches children to structure their movements. It gives them a sequence, rhythm, and pattern. It provides a forum for them to utilize the many movement skills learned throughout class in a fun, social, and meaningful way.

Physical Education

Montessori believed that movement was the key to engagement and learning. At ROS, we take it a step further and have a deliberate and focused approach to help students realize their physical potential. Our unique PE curriculum allows for the individual needs and strengths of every child, fostering a supportive yet challenging experience.

The Red Oaks Physical Education Curriculum has fitness, physical and social skill-building embedded in its objectives. The objectives are:

- To increase student awareness of the benefits of exercise, nutrition, and care of the body as motivation for the practice of fitness activities
- To increase student skills in performance of a wide variety of ball and body control movements
- To teach students the practice of respectful negotiation in differences in opinion, respectful understanding of differences in skills, and leadership skills involving inclusion and cooperation

Primary students will be introduced to a wide variety of movement patterns, skills and dances during physical education this year. Students will start off the year learning various movement concepts and then will work on skills necessary to play sports and games. Units covered during the school year include locomotor movements, parachute games, catching and throwing, kicking and trapping, dribbling and volleying, dance, and gymnastics.