

*We cannot create observers by saying "observe," but by giving them the power and the means for this observation.*

*-- Maria Montessori*

## **Observation Guidelines**

1. Please enter and leave the room quietly.
2. Please sit in one of the designated chairs. These chairs were placed in a certain spot so that all of the areas of the room could be easily seen.
3. If a child approaches, engage in a short conversation if necessary but remind the child you are there to "observe/watch" their work.
4. If you have any questions, please write them down and leave them for the teacher to answer when she is available and not working with the children.
5. LOOK CLOSELY: Notice hand/finger movements, when and who the child talks with, the specific works the child chooses. Notice if they have order, concentration, independence, and coordination. These things will help you develop questions to ask about the child as well as help you know what they do well and are interested in as well as what they need to improve on.

*Feel free to just sit and silently observe or use the observation guideline sheet and/or blank paper to write comments and/or questions to leave for the teacher or to take home with you to remind you of your experience.*

# Information about Montessori Classrooms

The classroom truly belongs to the children in it. They are responsible and take pride in maintaining the room, and working with the materials in a careful and thoughtful manner. The classroom is "sized" for the children,. Shelves are low to the ground and designed to be at the child's eye/hand level, chairs and tables are smaller to accommodate "younger" bodies and to make the children feel at home. You will not see multiple desks and chairs, but instead see a classroom environment that reflects how children really work, play, and learn, providing work spaces for individual and group activities at tables, on rugs, mats, and pillows.

Montessori classrooms welcome observations of parents and visitors, but usually not during the critical first three weeks of school. This is a time when the children begin to familiarize themselves with a new routine and a new environment. They are just learning new ground rules and the social aspects of sharing the classroom with many new "friends." For this reason, we ask that classroom observations are avoided as the new year begins.

When you are visiting, feel free to move to different parts of the room during your observation and take a close look at the activities on the shelves that children are working with. In order to see the classroom as it normally operates, it is important to remain as unobtrusive and quiet around the children as possible. The children are curious by nature and will often engage in conversation. Please feel free to tell them, "I am just being a watcher today."