

Nokomis Montessori Elementary South

2023-2024 Family Engagement Plan

School Overview:

Students at Nokomis Montessori South campus, serving the east side of Saint Paul, learn in multi-grade classrooms. We are a Montessori School utilizing the Montessori method; we also blend in components of other curriculum resources provided by Saint Paul Public Schools. Students use special Montessori materials that help them understand concepts and skills. Differentiated instruction is embedded in the Montessori methodology, with most lessons taught in small groups or 1:1. Students in a Montessori environment learn strategies to think and work independently. The Montessori teaching style and classroom organization maximizes the school learning environment and promotes positive school behavior.

Vision: Nokomis students will be independent yet collaborative learners who will contribute positively to their communities.

Core Values: Peacefulness, global citizenship, community, student choice & independence

Special qualities:

- Montessori pedagogy
- All-day Pre-Kindergarten & Kindergarten
- Multi-grade classrooms
- ALC Extended Day Classes (twice a week)
- High parent/family participation

We are organized into multiage classrooms: Children's House (CH, PreK – K), Elementary I (E1, grades 1 – 3) and Elementary II (E2, grades 4 – 5).

The Family Engagement Plan (FEP) is organized into four impact areas. We will be working together this year to build positive and goal-oriented relationships in each area. Families and staff at school developed this plan together. You are encouraged to share our ideas and feedback at any time by emailing Principal Abby Felber-Smith at abigail.felber-smith@spps.org or by calling the main office at 651-744-5500.

Welcoming Environment	
Our school has staff member(s) available for families to discuss this plan and ask questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Abigail Felber-Smith, Principal● Eva Xiong, Family School Partnership Liaison● Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

<p>Our school communicates with families in many ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principal Felber-Smith will continue to mail two welcome back letters to all families in August 2023. ● Open House is scheduled the week before school begins. We will distribute a 2023-2024 Nokomis Montessori Family Handbook including the Title I Compact and Title I Family Engagement Plan. ● Children’s House Montessori Teachers meet with all PreK and Kindergarten families for Welcome Meetings prior to the first day of classes. ● PTO meetings are held monthly. ● When families call, email or send a note, we do our best to respond within 24 hours. ● Important weekly information is sent home to families in backpacks in Nokomis Friday folders. ● Principal Felber-Smith will send occasional messages via email & text message to encourage family participation in school events. ● Principal Felber-Smith will send a weekly Nokomis Montessori family digital newsletter via email and will update the school website with important dates and announcements. ● Montessori teachers communicate with families regularly to build authentic relationships, share student work, and encourage participation in school events using newsletters, SeeSaw, or Schoology (E2 only). ● Principal Felber-Smith hosts “Coffee with the Principal” events monthly. Coffee with the Principal is organized as an informal conversation/feedback session between families and school. Some sessions focused on special topics co-facilitated with a Nokomis staff member.
<p>The achievement gap, or rather the “opportunity gap,” between students of color and white students in Saint Paul Public Schools is unacceptable. Our school is working to change practices and systems by identifying the barriers that make it harder for students of color to succeed and for their families to support their learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nokomis Montessori South staff will continue to receive training and share learning around Culturally Responsive Instruction. ● Nokomis staff and families will review student progress information through an equity lens. ● Nokomis teachers are deeply engaged in professional development and guided practice around English language instruction. ● One full-time Academic Support Teacher, one part-time Academic Support Teacher and a full-time WINN Reading Teacher will collaborate with classroom teachers to provide additional small-group and 1:1 instruction at each grade level. ● For more about our work on equity, families may contact Nokomis Montessori South Principal, Abigail Felber-Smith.

Transitions between schools can be challenging, and we work to help families as their children start and leave our school.

For new students and families, we support the transition by:

- Our PreK and Kindergarten students remain with the same Children’s House Montessori teacher for two years.
- The principal invites families to complete a “Class Placement Input” form in May, providing an opportunity for families to share input that will inform the class placement process.
- We encourage families to bring younger siblings to school events to support a positive transition to school.
- We host a booth at our district **School Choice Fair** in December.
- Prospective families are invited to an Open House in January.
- School tours and classroom observations are provided for new families upon request.
- In the spring, Nokomis Montessori South hosts an open house/registration event for incoming students, allowing new families to visit classrooms, meet staff, and meet current families.
- The special education team supports families with students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) during registration.
- Principal partners with the school clerk and school counselor to do outreach to parents of students recommended by teachers for Summer School who haven’t registered in late April to encourage them to register for additional academic support in free district summer school programs.

For students and families moving to the next school in their pathway, we support the transition by:

- Our school counselor facilitates five class lessons with our 5th grade students to support the transition to Middle School. He reviews these skills to support a positive transition: Organization skills, reading a schedule, opening a locker/lock, and peer pressure.
- In December and January, fifth-grade families receive reminders and updates about middle school open house events.

Family Partnerships

<p>Our school-parent compact establishes the shared responsibility for student success between the school, families, and students. Families and teachers work together to develop the compact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The compact is updated each spring. ● Copies of the compact are always available. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers distribute them at the beginning of the year ○ It is posted on the school website ○ Copies are available in the school office. ● Montessori Teachers will review with parents/families at the Fall families-teacher conferences.
<p>There are many opportunities for families to build connections to the school and to each other.</p> <p>We work to make school meetings and events accessible and welcoming for every family in the school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students stay with the same Montessori teacher in Children’s House (CH) for PreK-K; in Elementary 1 (E1) for grades 1-3; and in Elementary 2 (E2) for grades 4-5. This allows for stronger relationships to develop between teachers, students, and families. ● Family members are always welcome at Nokomis and are encouraged to volunteer for projects and events in and out of the classroom such as- copy/cut projects, Fun Run, Fun Fair, Field Day, Spring Concert, etc. ● Coffee with the principal is held each month. This is an informal opportunity for families to connect with the school principal and other school personnel. ● Each fall we host a Title I Annual Meeting where we will share information about school programs. ● Our Family-Community Engagement Committee and PTO host several events with the purpose of community-building (e.g., Fall Festival, Hmong New Year, Playground Socials, Spring Fun Fair). ● National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID) is scheduled February 2023. We invite parents to come for lunch with their child, and guest speakers are brought in to present to each class. ● Our annual Science Fair is scheduled in the spring. ● Volunteer Appreciation is scheduled in May/June 2024 and will include a light breakfast and certificates for volunteers. ● Music concerts are scheduled in winter and spring. ● Students perform by class at one of three assemblies around particular themes (International Peace Day, Equity/Inclusion & Environmentalism/Earth Day). Parents and families are invited to attend each assembly. ● Bilingual Hmong and Spanish-speaking staff members are available during the school day. ● Taxi transportation is available for school day or evening events. ● Digital monthly newsletter is translatable.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreters are arranged for November and March Parent-Teacher conferences and school events as needed by the EL teacher team. If unavailable, all staff have access to The Language Line, a resource for accessing interpretation services. • Virtual meeting options are available if transportation or childcare is an issue.
<p>Our school supports families as advocates and provides opportunities for parent/family leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We encourage families to contact their child’s Montessori, EL, Special Education or Specialist teachers with any questions or feedback. Phone numbers and email addresses are listed in our Nokomis Montessori South Family Handbook. • The Principal is approachable, available and responsive to any requests from families. • We do home visits as applicable. • The Principal frequently embeds professional development about working with families at staff meetings, team meetings, and one-on-one conversations with all staff members. • We review our Title I Compact, School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) and Family Engagement Plan regularly. • Principal schedules time at monthly Leadership Team and PTO meetings to monitor progress on the annual SCIP and Title I Family Engagement Plan.

Teaching and Learning	
<p>Our school shares information about state standards, assessment and student achievement with families in multiple ways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We offer regularly-scheduled November and March family-teacher conferences (and conferences per request). • Families can access all report cards through the Campus Student or Campus Parent/Guardian Portal. • Teachers share formal and informal assessment data with our K-5 parents during family-teacher conferences. • Our EL teachers share EL Progress reports at November and March family-teacher conferences. EL teachers provide academic language support to our grade K-5 students. • Our Special Education teachers share Special Education Progress reports at November and March family-teacher conferences. • Montessori students will create a video to share about the Montessori philosophy with families.

<p>Our school will engage in personalized learning as a key strategy to accelerate student achievement. Families can get more information using many tools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent log-in information can be accessed at spps.org/onestop or by asking the school clerk Beth LeRoux. ● We use iPads to support student learning at school. Student iPads go back and forth between school and home. ● Seesaw – CH and E1 Montessori Teachers use Seesaw to communicate with families including sharing student work ● Schoology – E2 Montessori Teachers use Schoology to communicate with families including student work.
<p>Many before- and after-school enrichment and support opportunities are available for students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EDL classes are offered on Mondays & Wednesdays for grades 2-5 only. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lego Robotics is offered for grades 4-5 students. ○ EDL Band/Strings is offered for grades 4-5 students. ● Discovery Club is offered and is a fee-based childcare program (before, after, and no school day). ● Conway and Battle Creek Rec Centers offer after school Rec Check and childcare on no-school days.

Community Partnerships	
<p>Our school develops community partnerships to provide additional support for students and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We collaborate with the Conway and Battle Creek Recreation Centers to offer after school Rec Check free after school childcare and/or programming on no-school days. ● We have an ongoing partnership with local artists that has been created to provide annual arts-in-residencies in our E2 classrooms funded by school-wide fundraisers. ● Nokomis Montessori South partners with the University of Minnesota Football Team, whose players volunteer in some E1 and Children’s House classrooms on a regular schedule. ● We have an ongoing partnership with MN Reading Corps; the partnership provides reading tutors to work with students in grades K-3. ● In SY1819 Nokomis South entered into a partnership with Hamline University to implement <i>English Learning in the Mainstream</i>. This framework continues to be at the center of our professional development.

This plan is available as part of our school's SCIP, or School Comprehensive Improvement Plan. It can be found on our school website at nokomis.spps.org, and printed copies are available, hanging outside the main office door.