

Montessori Parent Handbook

2016 - 2017



AL-HAMRA
A C A D E M Y

Al-Hamra Academy's mission is to promote academic excellence and apply the rich Islamic tradition of intellectual, moral, and spiritual learning. We strive to nurture future leaders who are proud of their identity and contribute responsibly in a global society.

**Al-Hamra Academy Montessori Program
(Pre-School and Pre-Kindergarten)**

“Adults work to finish a task, but the child works in order to grow, and is working to create the adult, the person that is to be.”

Maria Montessori

Welcome to Al-Hamra Montessori

Since 2008, Al-Hamra Academy has implemented the Montessori methodology for our Pre-School and Pre-Kindergarten program.

Introduction

Maria Montessori was the pioneer of the unique and empowering system of education called the “Montessori method”. She was the first Italian woman to become a physician. Her clinical observations led her to analyze how children learn, and she concluded that they build themselves from what they find in their environment.

According to Dr. Montessori, children’s minds are like sponges that can effortlessly absorb everything from their surroundings. Through her scientific observations she was able to create didactic (self-learning) materials. It helped her promote the idea that children learn best by ‘doing’ and ‘observing’ each other. It was her belief, that children ‘teach’ themselves and this truth inspired her to create an empowering teaching methodology.

Today, we know this methodology as “Montessori”.

"I studied my children, and they taught me how to teach them."

Maria Montessori.

Our Montessori Program

The Montessori Method of education is structured around, and promotes the child's natural, self-initiated impulse to become absorbed in an environment and to learn from it. The specific materials, techniques and curriculum areas employed in this program, assist each child in reaching his or her full potential.

Al-Hamra Montessori Program is run by qualified teachers who are trained by NEMTEC (<http://www.nemtecmontessoritraining.com>) under the auspices of the American Montessori Society (www.amshq.org). Our classroom is well structured with authentic Montessori material, to encourage your child to freely choose from a number of developmentally appropriate activities. Child-sized furniture, easily accessible shelving and freedom of choosing activities or ‘work’ make the learning very interactive and natural. The curriculum areas in the class are sequenced from a concrete to abstract manner. Arabic, Religion and Quran are also integrated into the Montessori environment.

Our Philosophy

At Al-Hamra Academy, we embrace the Montessori philosophy of “Follow the Child”. It is the essence and the spirit of the Montessori system. We pay great attention and care in preparing the environment in such a manner, that it sparks your child curiosity and adapts to their individual learning style. Important Islamic themes & values are incorporated within the environment throughout the year. Children are prepared to become independent learners. Here at Al-Hamra, we provide them opportunities to achieve life-time skills through integrating grace and courtesy lessons and demonstrating respect for every child. True to Maria Montessori’s observation, our class ranges from three year old to five year old. This mixed age grouping helps to build an enhanced learning environment with great chances of interaction with individuals at different learning levels. We have observed that children of all ages adapt very quickly and very well in this mixed setting.

Role of a Montessori Teacher

In a Montessori environment, teachers play a role of a guide and a facilitator. Their primary goal is to act as a good observer, an observer, whose job is to ensure a safe & prepared environment in constant harmony to your child’s needs. She observes the children to determine where they are in their development and guides them to appropriate lessons and activities. The teachers model desirable behavior for the children, following the ground-rules of the class, exhibiting a sense of calm, consistency, grace and courtesy, and demonstrating respect for every child, which is the essence of Montessori.

The teacher is also responsible for record keeping. She keeps a track of each child’s academic and social progress throughout the year. Our teacher employee different record keeping techniques including the use of our online School System (www.orbund.com) to track attendance and communicate with the Parents.

The teachers have a keen insight into the ever explorative and expanding world of your child as they progress through their development stages. It is very important for teachers and parents to interact at all levels to be able to better understand the ‘young learner’s need and to accommodate to it as needed.

- Facilitates your child’s learning by preparing the environment, by observing and listening to him/her to better understand their needs, and by acting as a model for children.
- Tracks each child’s academic and social progress throughout the year.
- Respects the child’s individuality, personality, rate of learning, rights and needs.
- Reinforces ground rules and thereby protect the rights of the child.
- **Teacher would intervene if:**
 - **One child is disturbing the activities of another.**
 - **One child is dangerous to himself/herself or another.**
 - **A child is destructive to the learning materials.**

At Al-Hamra Academy, we encourage and welcome Parent’s contribution at all levels. We invite Parents to observe our Montessori classroom in session (please see observation guidelines below). This provides the parent with better understanding of the Montessori philosophy, its learning methodology and its disciplines. It also provides them an insight into their child’s interests, which can be further enhanced in everyday activities. We value this vital link and hold it to utmost importance.

Montessori Classroom Guidelines

To ensure the best possible learning experience and a safe environment for your child, the following guidelines have been setup for the Montessori Classroom.

Guidelines for Montessori Parents/Guardians

A safe environment is a healthy environment. We request you to please observe school Safety rules at school premises.

- Visit to the Classroom during normal school hours must be scheduled in advance with the administration office.
- Please notify the teacher or the administrative office for planned / unplanned absence of your child.
- The young learners are very observant and aware of their appearance. Please ensure proper hygiene and follow school dress code.
- Children start learning the value of time at a very young age. We request parents to be punctual on the drop off and pick up schedule.

Guidelines for Students

Respect, discipline, empathy & good etiquettes are the fundamentals of our classroom. These values are integrated in our activities throughout the day. They motivate these young minds, teach them independence, respect and create a love of learning.

Rights of the Child:

- To work alone or with friends.
- To freely choose activities/work during the work period.
- To choose the same activities repeatedly.
- To make mistakes without intervention.
- To have individual lessons and guidance as needed from an adult or another child.

Responsibilities of the Child:

- Being respectful to adults and other children.
- When the teacher is giving the lesson, students quietly observe the teacher.
- Choosing and using materials/activities respectfully.
- Returning all the materials/activities used during the work period.
- Cleaning up any spills or messes he/she makes as demonstrated by an adult.
- Students are taught to respect & share their environment with their fellow students.

Behavior Policy

Our goal at Al-Hamra Montessori is to create and maintain an environment that children can successfully reach to the zenith of their potential. Our classroom begins with the modeling of the appropriate behavior by the teacher combined with a high level of respect for each student. Many discipline problems can be avoided by the following proactive strategies practiced in our Montessori classroom.

The teacher will:

1. Provide a **structured** Montessori environment in which a child feels secure and confident to choose his/her work

2. Set **behavioral expectations** through classroom instruction, role modeling, and group meetings;
3. Discuss and build classroom rules and the Montessori Standards of Behavior
4. **Redirect** a child and use conflict **resolution** techniques
5. Work one-on-one with children who need additional guidance

Behavioral expectations from the Students;

1. **Respect** yourself, others and our environment.
2. Demonstrate **responsibility**, respect, and **self-restraint**.
3. Treat all classroom materials with great respect and care.
4. Return all things to their proper place.
5. Keep the school environment clean and orderly.
6. Keep bathrooms neat and clean at all times.
7. When in the classroom, be “engaged” in an activity/job at all times.
8. Use **walking feet** at all times except when on the playground.
9. Quietly walk on sidewalks, around the classrooms and offices.

If a student is not meeting the standards of behavior expected in the Montessori classroom, a meeting would be call with the parent/guardian. We hope this notification will open a positive channel of communication between home and school.

A child’s behavior becomes a problem when his/her negative actions disrupt the school environment and affect the positive values and culture defined. For the safety and well-being of all individuals in the Al-Hamra Montessori environment, the following are Unacceptable Behaviors:

1. Talking back and arguing;
2. Intentionally disrupting the learning environment;
3. Misuse of Al-Hamra materials or playground equipment;
4. Intentionally not following directions in the classroom or in the playground
5. Hitting, pushing or any form of physical abuse
6. Encouraging others to misbehave
7. Disrupting or impeding the work of others
8. Showing rudeness or disrespect to other

School Hours and Daily Schedule

Al-Hamra Montessori is open from 7:45am-3:00pm Monday through Friday. Please see the school calendar for school holidays and recess.

Arrival (Drop off):

Arrival time for all Montessori students is 7:45-8:00. Parents are requested to drop off their child with the Montessori teacher at the front door (main entrance of the school). **Please do not leave your child alone.** All Parents are requested to respect the privacy of the classroom and not enter without teacher’s permission.

Our Daily Schedule:

*** Indicates bathroom visit ***

7:45am - 8:00am	Arrival and Greeting
*8:00am – 8:30am	Indoor playtime with manipulative activities/Outside playtime (weather permitting)
8:40am – 9:00am	Group Snack time

9:00am - 9:20am	Circle time (movement/songs/calendar) Lesson Presentation
9:25am - 11:20 am	Montessori Work Cycle
*11:30am – 12:00 am	Arabic Circle Time/Arts and Crafts with Sr. Azra
12:00 pm	Half day dismissal
12:00 pm - 12:50 pm	Lunch Time
*1:00 pm - 1:45 pm	Nap Time
2:00 pm - 2:10 pm	Transition /light Snack
*2:15 pm - 2:45 pm	Recess (weather permitting) Movement/Story Time
2:45 pm - 3:00 pm	Preparation for dismissal/ greetings
3:00pm	Dismissal

Dress Code

- See pages (9-11) of the Parent-Student Hand Book
- For the first two months of School, students must be in the blue gym pants every day. (Navy blue sweatpants with elastic waist and elastic at ankles. No wind pants, emblems, logos, stripes, etc.)
- Montessori students are ***not allowed*** footwear with ***laces*** or the ones ***that light up or make sound***.
- ***Any other shoes/slippers are not allowed.***
- For indoor shoes please send 'crocs' for your child.

Extra Clothes: (For Boys / Girls)

Please send an extra set of clothes, preferable uniform, labeled with your child's name in a clear Ziploc (gallon size) bag.

- 1 white shirt (plain)
- 1 blue Pants (plain, please no tights/shorts)
- 1 pair of black socks (plain)
- 1 undershirt and underwear
- ***sundresses or shorts are not permitted.***

Nutrition / Snacks / Lunches / Sugar Policy

Al-Hamra Montessori strives to teach and model proper nutrition. **We ask that sugar be kept at a strict minimum at the school. Please read labels and do not send your child to school with sugar laden lunches.** For more information, as well as suggested healthy snack and lunch ideas, please see our food list at the end of the hand book.

Gum, Candy and chocolates are not permitted at school. Please help us by not packing these items in box lunches.

Healthy Snack Program

Snack preparation and planning is a wonderful opportunity for parent/child interaction and to reinforce the cooking and nutrition skills gained at school. Families take turns providing simple, nutritious snacks for their child's class.

Montessori Parents are requested to participate in providing snack on a rotating basis throughout the year. In the preparation & the planning of the snack, we encourage the parents to involve & interact with their child.

Please see the Montessori staff for coordination and list of suggested snacks for this program. Your assistance and cooperation in the above is dually appreciated!!

Please inform the staff about any food allergies for your child.

Lunch

Parents of full day students are requested to ...

- Send adequate lunch and a snack with their child.
- Lunch should be packed in a proper lunch box/bag, appropriate for the age of the child.
- Lunch should not be provided in disposable plastic/paper bags.
- For example, cut fruits and vegetables and send oranges and tangerines peeled unless your child can already do this for him/herself.

As part of our curriculum, students are given 30 – 45 minutes for lunchtime. To ensure healthy eating habits, children are encouraged to eat independently.

Half Day Students do not have to bring lunch every day. They are welcome to buy hot lunch on the days mentioned above.

Half-Day Dismissal

Please note the pick-up time for Half-Day Students is 12:00p.m Sharp.

Nap time

It is important for all Full Day Students to have 1 hour of rest every day. Please send the following items on the first day of the school. These items are also listed in the School Supply list.

- Sleeping Mattress
- Crib Sheet (ONLY)
- Blanket (toddler size)
- One Soft Stuffed Toy

Toilet-Training

Children should be **fully potty trained** before starting school.

Pull ups/training under pants are not allowed.

If bathroom **accidents recur**, Parents will be called in school.

Others

We encourage Parents at Al-Hamra Academy to interact with each other. For this, please see the Administrative Office to sign up on the Montessori Directory.

It may please be noted that Montessori staff cannot facilitate any events or parties (e.g. Birthday Parties). Invitation or celebration of such parties cannot be accommodated during school hours.

Parent Involvement Program

"The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind."

In the Montessori program, parent involvement is considered crucial. Parents are the link between the home and the school. We strongly believe in keeping continuity between the school and home through the participation of parents. We really encourage building a partnership between our families and our school.

We have multiple parent activities to build this continuity, including;

- Assisting us with the snack program (detailed below)
- Back to school nights
- Volunteer and help Montessori staff with gym schedule
- Parent Education/Montessori Information Sessions (Mandatory for all parents)
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Classroom observations, Guest Reader and coming in as a Community Helper (detailed below)
- Project Fair days
- Author's Breakfast
- Fund-Raising Dinner
- Spring Bazaar

The success of the School's community building and fundraising activities relies on the involvement of parents. These activities present opportunities for parents to contribute their time and talents to our School community. Parent involvement is greatly appreciated at Al-Hamra Academy.

For information & schedule on the above, please see Montessori Staff.

Please note that the "Parent Education/Montessori Information Sessions" is mandatory for all Montessori parents.

Observation Guidelines:

As we proceed in the school year, Parents are not only welcomed, but are encouraged to come and observe their child in Montessori classroom. We request parents to observe the following guidelines in an effort to create least distraction and disturbance to our young learners.

- Schedule an appointment in advance with the Montessori Staff.
- Arrive on time and signup with the Office first.
- You will be provided with
- Parents Comment Sheet
- Visitors Badge & sheets to take notes for yourself.
- Personal belongings & cameras are not allowed in the classroom.
- Turn off all noise making devices (cell phones/pagers).
- We request only one adult/parent to come for observation.
- Observations are generally limited for 20 – 25 minutes.
- Please do not engage in conversation with students, as it causes distraction for them and other children.
- Avoid working with the children. The materials are presented in a specific manner and it will confuse the child if they are handled differently.

- Suggestions on what to look for as you observe:
- Concentration level of the children.
- Children interaction with each other.
- Teachers interact with the children.
- Activities that children perform and how long they spend doing them.
- Montessori materials and how they are handled by the children.

Your observation feedback and questions are very important for the teachers. Please leave them with the office and the Montessori Staff will follow up with you on them. If needed, please feel free to make an appointment with the Montessori Lead Teacher.

Healthy Snack and Lunch Ideas

Full day students bring their own lunches to school. Prepare small portions of food so that your child can be self-sufficient in feeding him/herself. For example, cut fruits and vegetables and send oranges and tangerines peeled unless your child can already do this for him/herself.

- Fresh Fruits (Apples, Bananas, Strawberries, Orange, blueberries, etc)
- Fresh Vegetables (Carrots, Cucumbers, Tomatoes, Celery, etc)
- Graham crackers, Raisins, Cheese, Yogurt, etc)
- Slices of hearty bread sandwich (whole wheat, oat, rye, etc)
- Rice, boiled eggs, pasta, etc

Please pack a well-balanced, nutritious meal, excluding candy and other highly sugared or salted foods with excessive amounts of additives and preservatives.

If your child has any food allergies please inform the administration as well as the Montessori Staff. We request parents to send in snack for their child if he/she has any food allergies.

Please read the Al-Hamra Parent Student Handbook and the Montessori Guide carefully. If you have any questions/concerns please reach out to our Montessori staff. You are required to sign the last page, and give it to the Montessori Staff by 11/9/2013.

Please note that the best way to communicate with the Montessori Staff is using the School's Online System (www.orbund.com). You may call the school to schedule an appointment.

Hina Bilal
Montessori Lead Teacher
hinab@alhamraacademy.org

Parent of : _____

I have been provided with the Parent Student Hand Book.

I have read and understood the sections of the book.

Parent's Name

Parent's Signature

Date