

PROGRAM STATEMENT

In alignment with the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, Church Street Montessori's program statement is consistent with the Ministry's policy on programming and pedagogy on How Does Learning Happen? This document is updated from time to time and it connects our school community - children, parents and our staff.

The focus of this document is primarily the four main principles stipulated by the Ministry - Belonging, Engagement, Expression and Wellbeing. This program statement is consistent with our Province's view of children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential and provides a positive framework to support children and families.

Goal 1: Promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of children

Approach: Church Street Montessori is committed to all of the above Goals

Health: Snack table is open from the start of school.

Safety: Our snacks are carefully chosen. We are aware and are extremely sensitive to children's allergies and other sensitivities. Snack table is monitored by a staff member when children are using it. All staff handling food follows proper hand washing procedures before and after handling food. Food is always stored at the right temperature. The fridge temperature is monitored and recorded on a daily basis.

Nutrition: Church Street Montessori is proud to offer unlimited nutritious snacks for all children. Our snack is nut-free and every child is free to choose every day from a choice of fruits, whole wheat crackers and cheese. All our parents choose to pack healthy nutritious lunches for their children and our parent handbook specifies that we recommend not sending any treats to school.

Wellbeing of Children: All children are encouraged to eat because we believe that a child can concentrate and work better only if they are well fed and hence do not restrict the quantity of snack that a child eats. At Church Street Montessori, we are very particular about children's nutrition and hence closely monitor the kind of foods that they bring for lunch.

Goal 2: Support positive and responsive interactions among children, parents and staff

Approach: Church Street Montessori is committed to the principles of Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and shows its commitment by incorporating the following.

Children: Our casa program is designed with frequent field trips and volunteer activities that compliments learning by allowing the children to see practical applications of what they learn at school. The right mix of classroom activities and field trips enables us to cultivate a keen interest in academic subjects while providing ample opportunities for children to expand their general knowledge and social skills. Our field trips not only include trips to pumpkin patch, apple orchards and maple syrup farms, but also simple ones to the local library, banks and other stores.

Parents: Our school encourages a community atmosphere. We have an open door policy with parents. Parents are encouraged to phone, email or message if they have any concerns. Parents are welcome to observe in the classroom all through the year. We invite parents to seek parent-teacher interviews all through the year, in addition to the twice a year in January and May or June every year. Every morning, our staff engages with parents in regular conversations on various topics, at drop off and pick up times.

Staff: Our trained staff will accompany children on all field trips, some of which are in smaller groups encouraging more involvement and dialogue about the trip itself. We encourage our staff to engage children and parents every day updating one another on all developments and happenings. In addition, little notes are jotted on our daily log so all of us are aware of developments and happenings.

Goal 3: Encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate

Approach: Church Street Montessori is committed to the holistic development of children and shows its commitment to this goal in the following manner.

Following proven Montessori principles, our aim is to nurture every child, one child at a time, in achieving his or her highest potential. Our ultimate goal is to provide the foundation for holistic development for enabling our children to not only excel in academics but also become creative, independent thinkers confident-enough and socially-fit to approach the challenges in life. We strive to achieve this by offering an enriched, intellectually stimulating learning environment of excellence, respect, independence, love and harmony. By offering lessons on one-on-one basis, we nurture every individual's strengths and thereby enabling them to be in control of their work on a daily basis. Our classroom prides itself on self-regulated learning. Children are often found selecting an activity on their own and working with deep concentration. Our environment encourages children to work on their choice of activities as long as they wish to do it. This enables them to learn by self-discovery which promotes confidence and a keen interest in learning in a very positive manner.

Goal 4: Foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry

Approach: Church Street Montessori believes in every child being unique and capable and we show our commitment to this goal by incorporating the following.

We are committed to providing an intellectually stimulating learning environment of excellence, respect, independence, love and harmony. Our curriculum is purposeful and our classroom is directed in a manner where we can pay individualistic attention so that each child can develop at their pace academically, physically, socially and emotionally.

Our AMI-Recognized learning environment nurtures:

Creativity and innovation: Children are presented with various activities individually and then children are encouraged to use those materials in a manner they deem fit. The only rules that apply in the classroom are - "Do Not hurt; do not destroy and do not disturb."

Leadership, collaboration and autonomy: Children are encouraged to choose their choice of partners to work with. They are welcome to work independently or collaboratively. It is entirely their choice. It is also their choice to work at a table or a mat on the floor. The three year age mix fosters inter-dependence, social responsibility and problem solving through healthy communication.

Self, social and environmental responsibility: Our environment is set up entirely to explore and learn from one another. Younger children learn from older ones and older children become role models for younger ones. We encourage children to seek one another's help in finding answers to their questions.

Goal 5: Provide child-initiated, adult-supported experiences

Approach: Church Street Montessori's fundamental philosophy is based on this goal.

Our environment is filled with such enriching educational experience. Our annual Christmas lunch is one which is a product of initiatives by children. The planning and the execution of the event happen over a period of several weeks. Children bring forth ideas of what to prepare in terms of a menu, what to buy in order to host the event, make the list of things to be bought to make their crafts and then also make the trips to the store to buy everything needed. They help us host the event by being involved in making crafts as gifts for parents, gift wrapping them, setting up tables, writing place cards, and making table decors. In addition to this, the children also perform songs of their choice on the day of the event. We have similar events for Mother's day and Father's day that the children help plan and execute. On a daily basis too, our children initiate purposeful choice of work, their own schedules and ideas, thus rendering their experience at our school a fulfilling experience.

Goal 6: Plan and create positive learning environment and experiences

Approach: Our AMI-Recognized learning environment naturally supports the above goal.

Honesty, integrity and mutual respect: Fundamental to our positive learning environment is honesty, integrity and mutual respect. We foster that in children by being true role models of these traits. We practice compassion and kindness. We take pride in keeping the tangible environment very clean and aesthetically inviting, thereby ensuring that children also take pride in making sure the environment stays the same way. Our environment believes in intrinsic rewards and self-regulation. We encourage children to problem solve and sort out issues with their peers by engaging in meaningful conversations.

Goal 7: Incorporate indoor and outdoor play as well as active play, rest and quiet time

Approach: We believe that the indoor environment and the outdoor environment are equally important to the wellbeing of children. So are rest and quiet time.

Our renovated quaint century home with a large backyard is ideal for children to learn, socialize and play in a home-like environment. Our half-day children experience scheduled outdoor time before mid-day dismissal at 12:15 pm. Our full-day children experience scheduled outdoor time after lunch and after school as well if weather permitting. During inclement weather, should children not be able to go out, we have indoor recess which includes dancing to encourage movement. Aside from this, we also have numerous outdoor practical life activities such as raking, gardening and shoveling, which are extensions of our curriculum. Our self-regulated environment provides for a quiet work space every day and should children be tired, they are offered a cot to rest. Napping is not compulsory in our space because the space is designed to respect individual needs of children. Children are offered the choice to rest.

Goal 8: Foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents

Approach: Parents are an extension of our family and we communicate openly on a regular basis.

We have an open door policy. Communication with parents happens on a daily basis at drop-off and pick-up time. In addition, parents are well informed through regular emails and phone calls. Parents are encouraged to observe in the classroom. Although we have parent teacher interviews twice a year, parents are welcome to seek interviews through the year. There are no restrictions on the

number of times a parent may choose to talk to us. Parents are encouraged to check our Facebook page and website that have links to pertinent sites, blogs and videos on child development. We seek the help of parent volunteers at our events. We also encourage them through regular communication to help one another in terms of pick-ups and drop-offs (always ensuring that we have in writing the names of parents and others who are authorized to pick up children).

Goal 9: Involve local community partners and allow those partners to support children, families and staff

Approach: We partner and support the community in the following manner.

We are a proud supporter of local high schools. We have students who do their co-op program with us for a few months. Our past graduates who are now in high school also come back to serve as volunteers in our space. For this, these students have to go through all required ministry requirements such as criminal background check and medical test. These students become such an integral part of our children's lives that eventually families even invite these students to their homes for meals. Families bring these students gifts in appreciation of their involvement.

Goal 10: Support staff with continuous professional learning

Approach: Encourage and support staff on professional learning.

At Church Street Montessori, all our staff is trained in Montessori education. Our assistants, including our lunch/recess staff, have AMI Assistants training. We encourage and support our staff, our part-time supply assistants, in taking refresher courses to maintain their knowledge and training. We also encourage our staff to visit other schools for observations, so they can bring valuable insight to incorporate and enrich our learning environment. We hold staff meetings to review and update policies and procedures and staff ideas are always welcomed.

Goal 11: Document and review the impact of strategies

Approach: We have implemented the following to meet this goal.

We monitor the pedagogical progress of every child through a dedicated document for every child. Our focus is not only on the academic development of a child, but also the social and emotional development of a child. Our work is also based on observation and hence, as educators, we take time to observe our children. Such observations often include the work the child is doing, the length of concentration, the understanding of the material the child is working with and the choice of working alone or with another child. In addition we also observe the whole classroom to gain an understanding of how normalized the environment is (a process used commonly to measure the smooth functioning of a classroom by gauging concentration levels of multiple children at a certain time of a given day).

In addition, we now have a Program Policy Implementation book which documents occurrences that happen with children and how they are directly related to our program statement. This is then reviewed on a regular basis to see how things can be altered or fostered in order to help children thrive in our environment.