

Frequently Asked Questions Primary Montessori Program 2021-2022

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I. Application Process

1. Who can apply?

- The student must live in Arlington County.
- The child needs to be toilet trained at the time of entry into the program.
- The Primary Montessori program accepts applications for three, four, and five year old children.
- The year children are considered for entry is determined by the student's age on or before September 30th.

Three Year Olds: The student must turn three years old on or before September 30th.

Four Year Olds: The student must turn four years old on or before September 30th.

Five Year Olds: The student must turn five years old on or before September 30th.

2. When do I apply?

Three Year Olds:

- Applications are accepted via online portal between February 1st and April 15th.

- If April 15th falls on a weekend, applications are accepted through the following Monday until 4:00 pm.
- Applications received during this time period are placed together in one pool of applicants and then are divided according to eligibility criteria including income and sibling preference.
- If there are more applications than spaces available, a random double blind lottery is used to select the order of applicants invited to enroll.
- Applications received after April 15th are placed on the waitlist after applicants who applied between February 1-April 15th.

Four Year Olds:

- An application may be submitted for the four year old year at any time.
- The application will be placed at the end of the waitlist in the order it is received.

Five Year Olds:

- A new application is required for five year olds who are not already in the program.
- Applications are accepted between February 1 and April 15th.
- If April 15th falls on a weekend, applications are accepted through the following Monday until 4:00 pm.
- Applications received during this time period are placed together in one pool of applicants and then are divided according to eligibility criteria including sibling preference and previous Montessori experience.
- If there are more applications than spaces available, a random double blind lottery is used to select the order of applicants invited to enroll.
- Applications received after April 15th are placed on the waitlist after applicants who applied between February 1-April 15th.

3. Where do I apply?

- Applications are accepted via online portal between February 1st and April 15th.
- Students can apply to more than one school based on their address.
- A student's neighborhood school is determined by the student's home address. Each neighborhood school is served by one feeder school that offers Montessori classes as well as Montessori Public School of Arlington
- To determine the neighborhood school for a home address, use the "Boundary (Attendance Area) Locator" on the APS website under Registration or call School & Community Relations at 703-228-7667.
- To determine corresponding schools for the neighborhood school, look at the APS website under Montessori, or call the Office of Early Childhood at 703-228-8632.

- There are 17 Primary Montessori classes located at the following schools: **Barrett, Carlin Springs, Discovery, Fleet, Montessori Public School of Arlington, Jamestown, and Oakridge.**

4. How do I apply?

- Submit a Primary Montessori Application via online portal.

5. If I am an APS employee, but not an Arlington County resident, is my child eligible for the Montessori program?

- No, the student must live in Arlington County, regardless of where a parent works.

6. Can I apply for my child to enter in the middle of the year?

- Yes, applications are accepted all year.
- If there are no openings, the application is placed on the waitlist in the order received.
- A new application must be submitted for the five year old year for children who are not already enrolled in the program.

7. May I submit an application for my child for the three year old class when he/she is two?

- Applications are only accepted for those children who will be three by September 30th of the following school year.
- Children may be two during the application period (February 1- April 15); however they must turn three on or before September 30th to be eligible.

II. Lottery Criteria

1. Is there sibling preference?

- Yes, sibling preference is determined by School Board Policy 25-2.2 Enrollment and Transfers for Schools and Programs.
- At all Primary Montessori sites sibling preference is given to students who *concurrently* have a sibling in the Montessori program.
- Please note that sibling preference is for entry into the Primary Montessori program only. It does not imply that older siblings are able to enter those schools if a younger sibling is accepted into the Primary Montessori program.

2. Does my family income impact the lottery criteria?

- Yes, 2/3 of the positions are for students whose parent's income is at or less than **\$100,800 for School Year 2021-2022.** (\$100,800 is 80% of the median income in Arlington for a family of four.)

3. What if I have twins?

- Twins are treated as one in the selection process and admitted as two students, as stated in School Board Policy Options and Transfers J-5.3.31

4. How is the number of children in each age category determined?

- Schools try to maintain classes with equal numbers of children in each age category (three, four, and five year olds) and to have at least five children in each age category in each classroom.
- Children in their kindergarten year are strongly encouraged to complete the final and third year of the Primary Montessori program.
- More information on the importance of completing the third year is available at **Montessori Information Night**, on the APS website, from the Office of Early Childhood and Montessori teachers and staff.

III. Accepted Applicants, Waitlist, and Transfers

1. When do I find out whether my child has been accepted into the Montessori class or placed on the waitlist?

- After April 15th, if there are more applications than spaces available, a random double blind lottery according to eligibility criteria including age, family income, and sibling status is held.
- After the lottery is conducted, families are notified through the online application portal
- Montessori enrollment and waitlist procedures are based on School Board policies, which are located on the APS website under School Board.
- Option and Transfers J-5.3.31 states, "If there are more entry level applications than spaces available, a random double-blind lottery will be held. As a result of this lottery, a waiting list will be created. As space becomes available, admission will be offered to students on the waiting list in the order established by the lottery."

2. How long is the spot held for a student who has been offered admission before taking the next student off the waitlist?

- a. Notification from APS regarding timelines will be published each year. Generally the window for accepting a seat is 15 days.

3. What do I do if my child is currently enrolled in a Montessori class and I move to a different neighborhood zone?

- During the school year, students who move within Arlington but out of the designated attendance area for an area school or program may complete

the year in which they are enrolled. (Parent/Guardian will be responsible for the transportation.)

4. What if my child will be absent due to a family trip (or other reason)? Will my child lose the placement in the program?

- A student who is absent for 15 days or more is withdrawn from any program.
- If there is a waitlist for the program, the school will then contact the next family on the waitlist to fill the position.
- A family is always encouraged to speak with the teacher and the principal if their child is going to be absent for an extended period of time.

5. What are the chances of my child being offered a position if he/she is on the waitlist?

- It is always better to apply and be on the waitlist than not to apply and have no opportunity to be enrolled in the program.
- Coming off the waitlist depends on the number of students on the waitlist and if the families who are offered positions accept or reject the offer of enrollment.
- The school continues to offer positions until all the classes are full.
- Schools try to have the classes full by the end of June. However, this is not always possible and schools may offer positions throughout the summer.
- Openings can occur throughout the year and families are notified if space becomes available.

6. If my child is accepted into a primary Montessori program at a school, can my child stay at the school for first through fifth grade?

- This option is only available for students applying to Montessori Public School of Arlington as satellite Primary Montessori sites. Families are encouraged to apply for MPS for 1st grade after completion of the primary Montessori program.

IV. Registration

1. What documents do I need to register my child?

- Families need to complete a registration packet for each student.
- Registration packets are available online.
- Families of three and four year old students also need to submit the Office of Early Childhood Income Verification form with required documents at the time of registration. (Families who are in the 1/3 income group and agree to pay the maximum Montessori tuition fee do not need to complete the form.)

2. Where do I submit the registration documents?

- All documents need to be submitted to the Welcome Center /The Language Services and Registration Center.

3. What if we speak a language other than English at home?

- The student registers at the Language Services and Registration Center (LSRC).
- LSRC is located at the Syphax Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204.
- The phone number for LSRC is 703-228-7663.

V. Transportation and Tuition Fees

1. Is transportation provided for all Montessori students of Arlington?

- Only **Montessori Public School** provides transportation for three year old students who live more than one mile from the school.
- Transportation is provided for students who turn four by September 30th of the school year and who live in the attendance zone of the school or use bus stops established for K-12 students attending the same school.

2. Who has to pay for the Primary Montessori program?

Three Year Olds:

- Tuition fees are charged for all three year old students.

Four Year Olds:

- **No tuition fees are charged for four year old students whose family's household income is at or less than \$100,800 for School Year 2021-2022.** (\$100,800 is 80% area median income for a family of four.)
- Tuition fees are charged for four year old students whose families do not meet income eligibility--household income above \$100,800 for School Year 2021-2022.

Five Year Olds:

- No tuition fees are charged for students in their five year old year.
- This is the year in which a child has turned five by September 30th and is eligible for enrollment in Kindergarten.

3. How much are the Montessori tuition fees?

- Montessori tuition fees are on a sliding scale based on the student's family's adjusted gross income.
- To determine the family's adjusted gross income, families complete the *Office of Early Childhood Income Verification* form.

- The School Board establishes and publishes Montessori Tuition Fees on July 1 before each school year. Families are encouraged to review the current year's fees to estimate the potential cost of the program.
- The Montessori tuition fees are on the APS website under Montessori and under School Board PIP, Fees and Tuition (\$BP D-15 PIP-2). The fee schedule is also available at each school, the Office of Early Childhood and Welcome Center.
- Families who have a three or four year old Montessori student are informed of their tuition fees in writing by the school the summer prior to the beginning of school.

4. Do I need to complete the Office of Early Childhood Income Verification form?

- Families complete the form **only** if the child has been accepted into the Primary Montessori program as a three or four year old student.
- The form is used to confirm income eligibility for 2/3 positions. Total annual household income must be at or below **\$100,800 for School Year 2021-2022.** (\$100,800 is 80% area median income for a family of four.)
- The form is also used to calculate the family's adjusted gross income which determines the amount of Montessori tuition fees for that student.

5. Where can I find the Office of Early Childhood Income Verification form?

- The *Office of Early Childhood Income Verification* form is available at the Welcome Center.
- Income Verification will be completed with a registrar.

6. How does APS determine a student's tuition fees for the Montessori program?

- Tuition fees for the Montessori program are based on the student's family's adjusted gross income.
- To determine the adjusted gross income, families submit the *Office of Early Childhood Income Verification* form with required documents to the Welcome Center.
- The *Office of Early Childhood Income Verification* form requires a copy of a) a 2019 or 2020 federal tax return showing adjusted gross income; b) the three most recent pay stubs; and a letter of employment stating salary.

7. If my child is in his/her 4 year old year and our family makes less than 80% of the area median income, do we still pay tuition fees?

- No, tuition fees are not charged for four year old students whose parent's income is at or less than **\$100,800 for School Year 2021-2022.** (\$100,800 is 80% area median income for a family of four.)
- This is because APS also offers a free pre-kindergarten program (Virginia Preschool Initiative-VPI) available to four year olds whose household income is at or less than 80% area median income.

8. How come I am still paying tuition fees and my child has turned five?

- Students enrolled in Primary Montessori enter into their three, four, or five year old year according to the year they are eligible based on the September 30th birthday deadline.
- Students can be five years old and still in their “four year old year.”
- If the student turns five in their four year old year, families are responsible for tuition fees the whole school year.
- Students who are five by September 30th of the school year are not charged any tuition fees.

9. How often do I have to make tuition payments?

- Parents may pay the tuition fees in whole or in parts as best works with their family budget.

10. How are the tuition fees calculated when my three year old transitions into the program?

- Tuition fees are based on the number of instructional days that the student attends during the transition period.

11. How do I make a Montessori tuition payment online?

- Parents may use *mySchoolBucks.com*.
- The link is available from the APS website and the service is easy to use, convenient, private and secure.
- There is a convenience fee per transaction or parents can pay an annual membership fee.
- When setting up an account, parents will need to provide the student's name, birth date or student ID number.
- The same account can be used to make payments to other APS services, such as Extended Day.

12. Can I schedule tuition payments to be made automatically?

- Yes, *mySchoolBucks.com* allows scheduling of automatic recurring payments.

13. Are all Montessori fees payable on *mySchoolBucks.com*?

- No, payments for checks returned for non-sufficient funds must be made at the Welcome Center. The only forms of payment that are accepted to replace a non-sufficient funds check are cash, cashier's check, or money order.

14. Can I view my account balance information online?

- No, only payment history is online.
- Information regarding unpaid tuition balances is not available online.
- Please contact the Welcome Center to verify the balance.

15. Will I receive confirmation that a payment has been made?

- *MySchoolBucks.com* sends an electronic confirmation to the assigned e-mail address.
- This confirmation is not a receipt of payment from the Montessori program.

16. Who do I pay if I do not want to use the online system?

- Welcome Center receives all payments.
- One option is to write a check payable to "Arlington Public Schools."
- Payment can also be made in cash, a cashier's check or a money order.

17. How do I get a receipt for my payment?

- Receipts are issued at the Welcome Center.

VI. Extended Day

1. Which schools have the Extended Day program for 4 year old?

- All other schools have Extended Day for four year olds.

2. How much does Extended Day cost?

- For more information about Extended Day, please contact the Extended Day office at the Clarendon Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard Arlington, VA 22204. The phone number is 703-228-6069.

3. How do I enroll in Extended Day?

- You must apply for Extended Day during a spring application window that is published each year.
- For more information about Extended Day, please contact the Extended Day office at the Clarendon Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard Arlington, VA 22204. The phone number is 703-228-6069.

VII. Primary Montessori Program

1. How many students are in each class?

- There are 23 students in each class.
- The class is a composite of 3, 4, and 5 year olds.
- Each class has a full time certified teacher and instructional assistant.

2. What schedule do the children follow?

- The Montessori program follows the APS school year calendar.

- The hours are the same as the elementary school day for each specific site.
- Entering (three year old) Montessori students are phased in according to the schedule assigned by their school. Families will receive a letter with their child's start date prior to the beginning of the school year.
- All three year old Montessori students are phased in on or before September 30th.
- Returning Montessori students (four and five year old years) start on the first day of the school year.

3. Do the three year olds take a nap?

- The Montessori philosophy is based on creating a responsive environment appropriate for each individual child's developmental level and needs.
- The individual teacher determines the best schedule for the student based on their age appropriate needs.
- Parents are encouraged to communicate openly with teachers regarding their child's individual needs and current routines.

4. Will my child attend specials offered at the school?

- All Montessori children participate in specials including art, music, physical education, and library.
- Montessori children also participate in other school wide activities and special offerings as appropriate.

5. Why is my child called a three year old when he is four years old?

- The Montessori primary classroom has students for three years.
- The first year they enter is considered the "three year old year," regardless of when they actually turn four. A child must be three by September 30th to be eligible for the three year old year.
- The second year is considered the "four year old year." Again, a child would need to be four by September 30th to be eligible for the four year old year.
- The third and final year is considered the "five year old year."
- Children's actual age does not change the year they are in for Montessori purposes.

6. What does it mean to be "toilet trained"?

- Acceptance into the Montessori Primary program is for children who are toilet trained.
- The Office of Early Childhood understands that being toilet trained is a developmental skill that children reach at different ages and informs parents to select this preschool option only if their child is toilet trained.
- The Montessori program does not provide the staffing nor has the facilities to provide toilet training for children.

- A toilet trained child wears underwear during the day at school and at home, uses the bathroom independently, indicates the need to use the bathroom, and is able to remove most clothes as necessary with little adult assistance.
- Toileting accidents, although expected as a rare occurrence, should diminish and be eliminated by December of the three year old year.
- A child is not yet considered toilet trained for APS preschool programs if the child continues to have multiple toileting accidents after the first month of school; has 8 or more toileting accidents in the first month, or has a toileting accident three or more times a week during a three week period of a time.

7. What if I want my child to continue in a Montessori program?

- Montessori Public School of Arlington offers a Montessori program for elementary age students and Gunston has a Montessori middle school program. Currently there is no high school Montessori program offered.

8. How many schools offer Primary Montessori classes?

- The Primary Montessori program is open for all eligible children who live in Arlington regardless of whether your neighborhood school has a Primary Montessori class.
- Primary Montessori classes are located at the following schools: **Barrett, Carlin Springs, Discovery, Drew, Fleet, Montessori Public School of Arlington, Jamestown and Oakridge.**
- There are 17 Primary Montessori classes available in Arlington in School Year 2021-22.

9. How can I find out more about the program?

- The APS website has information about the Montessori program detailing the history, instruction, and philosophy.
- Teachers and school leadership at each school are able to share about the Montessori program.
- APS sponsors an annual **Montessori Information Night** which provides parents with an overview of the program, how to register, and a chance to visit Montessori classrooms. Please check the APS website for date, time and location.
- The Office of Early Childhood can provide further information about the Montessori program, as well as the other early childhood program offerings at Arlington Public Schools, at 703-228-8632/6157.