

Part 3: THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Com-mu-ni-ty n. 1. A group of people sharing common interests . .

The school community

One of the special things about Selkirk Montessori School is its strong sense of community. Whether it is because the families in the school share a common respect for the Montessori philosophy of education, or it is because they are inspired by the dedication of the staff to the children and the school, or for any other possible reasons, there is a palpable sense of people working together to make things happen.

Another special quality of the school is the diversity of the people within it. The Montessori method is based on the universal stages of child development; it therefore works with all cultures. A Montessori school is not a training ground for any specific set of cultural beliefs, but a place for the child to become independent and to enjoy learning and growing up. The more cultural diversity the better.

The experience of diversity within community — of a kind of multicultural extended family — adds an invaluable extra dimension to the education of our children. It is an experience that stands apart from the divisiveness that they may experience in the everyday world outside the school. Learning with children from different cultures and seeing their parents working together with many different people impresses on children the possibility and hope of a harmonious future.

Volunteering

The overall well-being of our school community depends on volunteers. When families help out in any way they can, our children benefit from understanding, in a tangible way, our concern for their happiness and well-being. Seeing their parents helping out at the school is a very positive lesson for children.

By helping out in a variety of ways, families also give positive messages to the teachers—i.e., that we as parents care about what is going on and are interested in what our children are doing.

Last but not least, we are giving positive messages to the Board of Directors (who are also parents): we are showing them that we care about the school community, recognize their work, and want to help, too.

Not every family has unlimited resources of time or skills to offer, but there are things that any and all of us can do. Ample notice is always given through the newsletter and on the bulletin board of any work that needs to be done. In addition, as each family gets to know the teachers and their child's program, parents can find other ways to help.

Each family is required to perform a **minimum of 20 hours** of volunteer service for the school each academic year.

Fundraising

Fundraising is primarily undertaken by the Selkirk Parent Group and is an essential part of our school community's activities. The obvious reason for fundraising is to raise money for our school. We could do this easily by increasing tuition, but the result would be the loss of some of our families, which is an unacceptable alternative.

An active fundraising program serves several purposes beyond raising the actual dollars. The funds raised supplement our budget and allow us to plan for the purchase of items not covered by the regular budget. The fundraising program also shows businesses, foundations and private donors that we support an endeavour that we firmly believe in as citizens and parents. This show of support is essential when we are requesting grants or donations: if we don't support ourselves, why should anyone else?

Fundraising projects usually fall into one of two categories:

- in-house activities
- events that involve people beyond our own community.

The aim of the second category is to encourage participation by (i.e., to raise funds from) sources other than parents, who already contribute on a regular basis through tuition and in-house efforts.

Meetings

Parent Orientation/Meet-the-Teacher Night

The first formal meeting of the school year is the new parent orientation meeting, usually held in September and paired with the Meet-the-Teacher Night for returning families. Parents are invited to meet the administration and teaching staff, and attend a brief introduction session in their child's classroom.

This is a great time to learn more about the Montessori philosophy and to ask questions about the day-to-day operations of the school and class.

Parents can attend other types of formal meetings at the school:

1. Board Meetings

- **Purpose:** To make operation decisions about the school
- **How often:** At least once a month
- **Where:** Selkirk Montessori School
- **Attendance:** Pacific Montessori Society members may attend the regular portion of board meetings by notifying the secretary of the board through the office, by the first of the month. (This will ensure that the board takes account of their attendance in planning the meeting, preparing handouts, etc). Members may place items on the agenda by writing to the secretary of the board, through the office, by the first of the month. Members may address their items at the beginning of the board meeting. Regular minutes of each board meeting are available to members through the office. The board incorporates any confidential items into an in-camera session, which is not open to members.

2. Annual General Meetings

- **Purpose:** To elect board members and report officially on the status of the Pacific Montessori Society
- **When:** October of each year (This has been chosen specifically so that parents have the chance to learn about the school operations and to meet each other before the AGM is held.) The meeting is announced in the newsletter and posted on the bulletin board
- **Where:** Selkirk Montessori School
- **Attendance:** Open to members of the society in good standing. (All parents of children in the school with post-dated cheques submitted or automatic withdrawal arranged for the years tuition are automatically full members of the society.)

3. Selkirk Parent Group Meetings

The Selkirk Parent Group shall have two types of meetings:

- 1) a General Meeting to elect the Executive and Class Representative Officers; and
- 2) Meetings of the Officers to conduct the regular business of the Group.

The General Meeting will be held no later than the 1st week in October and preferably before the end of September and may take the form of a school BBQ/picnic to encourage attendance and involvement in the APG and welcome new families to the school.

Meetings of the Officers of the SPG are open to all SPG members; however, only Officers of the SPG are eligible to vote. Meetings will be held as required, preferably four times during the school year. Fifty percent of Officers must be present to constitute a quorum, of which 2 must be Executive. Administration, staff, and/or Pacific Montessori Board members may be invited to attend SPG meetings.

Notice of SPG meetings may be given to parents and/or guardians by means of the school newsletter, posted on the Selkirk Parent Group bulletin board and will be published in the school annual school calendar.

In the event of an extraordinary SPG meeting, the time and place shall be communicated through Class Representatives and the SPG bulletin board prior to such meeting.