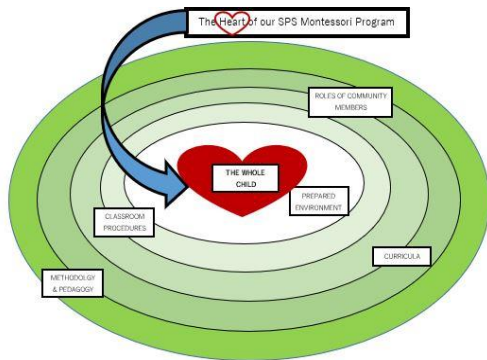


# MONTESSORI



## CONSISTENCIES OF BELIEFS AND PRACTICE IN THE SASKATOON PUBLIC SCHOOL'S MONTESSORI PROGRAM

### PURPOSE

To have parents and staff work together to develop a foundational document defining what the Montessori Program in SPSS offers. This document will serve as a summary of work, learning together, and conversations, that have come to be agreed upon as essential attributes of a program all are proud to be a part of. This document promotes consistency, guides, define and clarifies our work together. This work seeks to know, value and believe in all students as they learn and grow holistically using the Montessori philosophy to guide them. We will revisit, confirm, and modify this document as needs evolve, so long as we are moving forward together in the work.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Saskatoon Public Schools began offering an elementary Montessori program at City Park School in September 2016 to students in Grades 1 to 8 and is open to all. Montessori philosophy and methodology is used to deliver Saskatchewan curricula. Based on the educational ideals of Maria Montessori of following the child, learning is individualized and presented to match the stages of development of children. Students choose from prepared Montessori materials to work at their individual pace. Freedom within limits allows for each child to set goals and develop the independence and self-regulation to achieve. The teacher assumes the role of educational guide, offering individual, small group and large group presentations to all students.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What are common beliefs and practices found in SPS Montessori classrooms?
2. What components are essential to Montessori Philosophy? What were Maria Montessori's beliefs?

### DEFINITIONS & DEEPER UNDERSTANDINGS (alphabetically):

**ABSORBENT MIND**-When children are ages 3-6 (1<sup>st</sup> PLANE) they are 'sponge-like'. It is considered the sensitive period for language and math acquisition.

**AUTODIDACTIC**- Autodidactic learning is a lesson consisting of a presentation and working with autodidactic materials to move from concrete to abstract thinking about a concept. Montessori uses autodidactic materials that are designed or intended to teach and self-correct. These materials present specific information to the child. A teacher or educator functions as both a guide and a resource for students.

**\*COSMIC CURRICULUM**-This curriculum is about the interconnectedness of all things and the development of the whole person. Children are presented the five Great Lessons as a part of the cosmic curriculum as soon as possible and revisited throughout the year-**The Story of the Universe, The Story of Life, The Story of Humans, The Story of Math, and The Story of Language. They are presented these stories to ignite the child and inspire them to investigate the areas of study in the class.** Following these impressionistic lessons, children become engrossed in cultural studies. They might conduct experiments or research topics of interest, creating presentations for their classmates in the process. The possibilities are endless. Questions such as: WHO AM I? WHERE DO I COME FROM? WHY AM I HERE? WHO AM I IN THE NATURAL WORLD? are explored. The Cosmic Curriculum is presented over a three-year cycle and extend and expand into the next three-year cycle. All components remain available to all children during their three-year cycle. Cosmic Education is meant to be implemented organically throughout the years.

**CULTURAL STUDIES**-This learning comes from the following areas: history, geography, astronomy, geology, biology, physical science, archeology, and chemistry.

**"FOLLOWING THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD"**-through observation of the whole child, the guide or the educator becomes aware of the child's academic, social, emotional and physical needs and uses these observations to help guide the child to purposeful work. Teachers use the framework of Dr. Montessori's research of the Planes of Development to help identify the needs of the child. Montessori staff constantly observe the child in the classroom and pay careful attention to interests of the child and the activities to which they are naturally drawn, and we monitor their understanding and development of skills. Montessori teachers consider where each individual child is in their academic development, rather than imposing our own idea of what the child should learn at that time. If a child needs more time developing a skill, we have the freedom to give them that time to truly learn that concept or skill. If they have mastered a skill or concept, we give them the opportunity to apply skills or concepts to further their understanding. We also present them with more complex materials, used sensorially as an impressionistic work, to practice skills and concepts, and to plant the seeds for further knowledge. Children's academic experiences flow

from the concrete to the abstract naturally. From our observations and using the Planes of Development, we can follow the child and determine their needs. Maria Montessori stated, "Follow the child, but follow the child as his leader."

**GROWTH MINDSET**-Students thrive on challenge and see challenges as opportunities to enhance their educational experience. Maria Montessori referred to this as human potential.

**NORMALIZATION**- Normalization happens during the first month or so of school. This is when children learn routines and expectations in the classroom. They learn to function as a community member and learn their role in the classroom. During normalization, students learn to self-regulate and function in their environment with increasingly less to no intervention from the teacher.

The Stages of Normalization:

1. The child does something because they want to.
2. The child does something because he/she is asked to do it.
3. The child does something because they know it is right.

**\*\*PEACE EDUCATION**-There are three levels of peace that are the central focus of Montessori. The first is inner peace, the second is peace outside yourself: peace with others, and the third is world peace. The level of Peace a child is practicing is dependent on which Plane of Development they are presently in. First, the child must be focused, calm, and understand their own emotions and then proceed to engaging with others on an emotional level. This is often experienced during the first plane of development. They will experience different emotions and learn how to communicate in a simple way. For children six and under, that basic communication is enough. They can easily feel their emotion and release it. As children get older, in the second plane, they now find themselves in a position to make peace in a collaborative and nuanced way. It's not just enough to say, "I'm angry" and move on. Elementary aged children are looking for long-term solutions to their conflicts. Peace on the grander scale, in the broader vision of Montessori is world peace, particularly experienced in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plane. World peace comes from the unity of inner peace and peace with others. The other thing that's not so obvious about Montessori peace education is that we see conflict as an opportunity to learn. We strive to give a healthy approach to conflict and give them tools to resolve it. When we can help children understand the how and why of peace, then we can get at the true purpose of Montessori. This means actively understanding your own time, place and culture, and choosing to be a part of those things in a productive way.

**PEDAGOGY**-the method and practice of teaching.

#### PLANES OF DEVELOPMENT

- 1<sup>st</sup> PLANE (0-6 years): Students learn about the world around them through their senses and by asking the question WHAT.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> PLANE (6-12 years): Students begin to ask WHY.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> PLANE (12-18 years): Adolescents are discovering the answer to the question WHAT IS MY PLACE IN SOCIETY? and a valorization of one's own personality.
- 4<sup>th</sup> PLANE (18-24 years): WHAT WILL I DO in life, society...



**PREPARED ENVIRONMENT**-We provide the opportunities to learn, grow, and develop in a safe and carefully prepared environment, using the Planes of Development as our guide, which focuses on the needs of the child. The environment is created with the child in mind, considering both their current and future needs.

**PULL-OUT RESOURCE SUPPORT**-This type of resource support has the resource teacher working in the resource room with one or a few students to target a learning or behavior need.

**PUSH-IN RESOURCE SUPPORT**-This type of support has the resource teacher working in the classroom with a teacher to target needs or working with a student or giving a lesson to a few students that might have a need in a specific area. The resource teacher may do this right in the classroom or hallway.

**SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING**-is an instructional strategy where the students, with guidance from the teacher, decide what and how they will learn. It can be done individually or with group learning, but the overall concept is that students take ownership of their learning. Self-directed learning: being ready to learn, setting learning goals, engaging in the learning process, and evaluating learning.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS

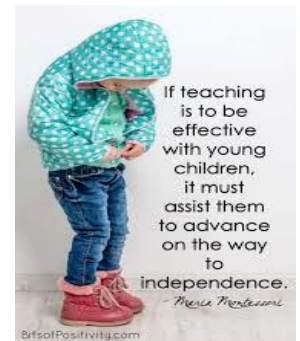
- People have innate Human Tendencies
- Human development occurs in stages along continual planes of physical and psychological growth—this happens at individual rates (Follow the Child)
- Within each plane there are sensitive periods for specific growth (Meeting the needs of the child)
- Observation is the key to understanding and guiding
- Children are intrinsically motivated to acquire/construct knowledge. (Inner Teacher) (Auto-didactic)
- All children have a drive towards "good" which should not be limited by extrinsic control (Human Potential)
- Sensorial experiences develop the intelligence (The Hand is the Instrument of intelligence) (Prepared Environment)
- Independence is essential for self-actualization. Independence is developed through freedom within the ability of responsibility. (Freedom within Limits; limited by the collective interest) (Prepared Environment)
- Children develop the ability to abstract through repetitive use of concrete materials and acting upon their environment (Auto-didactic, Control of Error, Isolation of Difficulty Concrete to Abstract/ Whole-to-Part-to-Whole)

- Peace is the work of Education (Peace Education Curriculum)
- The universe is interconnected (Cosmic Curriculum)
- Concentration is essential for constructing knowledge (Normalization/Self-Discipline/Self-Regulation)

\*Indicates where philosophy becomes methodology

## FRAMEWORK

The HEART of the SPS Montessori Program is Knowing, Valuing, and Believing in the WHOLE CHILD, and responding to the individual child through Montessori Beliefs and Practices. Our classrooms are intended to support each individual child. For this to transpire in our Montessori Program, the student must be at the center of all we do as educators and parents. These components support, or embrace, the individual child through: The Montessori Method and Pedagogy, which encompasses The Prepared Environment, the Montessori Classroom Procedures, Roles of Montessori Community Members (students, teachers, parents and administration), and the fusion of Saskatchewan curricula and the Montessori curricula. The visual in the document represents this framework.



## CLASSROOM COMPONENTS:

- A. Prepared Environment
- B. Classroom Procedures
- C. Roles of Montessori Community Members
- D. Curricula
- E. Montessori Methodology & Pedagogy
- F.

## DETAILS

- A. The “**prepared environment**” is Maria Montessori’s concept that the environment can be designed to facilitate maximum independent learning and exploration by the child. Montessori classrooms are designed to offer lessons/presentations, activities, and tools that match the developmental needs and interests of each individual child. The importance of a prepared environment rests on the belief that children learn from everything around them and on the Montessori concept of the teacher as a facilitator of the child’s efforts to create the adult they are to become. Each classroom is designed to support the child’s need for purposeful activity. Safe, responsive, and nurturing environments are an important part of supporting the learning and development of children. Such environments can also help to prevent challenging behaviors and help children with identified disabilities.

In a prepared environment of an elementary class we would see the following aspects: The Montessori materials in the classroom are presented on shelves in an orderly manner, allowing the child easy access and an ability to easily locate a specific topic of study. The areas in a Montessori classroom are as follows: a designated Peace space, History, Physical Science (geography, geology, astronomy, and chemistry), Life Science (botany, zoology, anatomy) Language, Geometry and Math, each encompassing cultural representation, Canadian content and Indigenous ways of knowing. Living plants or animals may be present, as well as specimens and objects to draw the child’s attention. Montessori materials can be described as concrete manipulatives, three-part card work, guided card work, charts, timelines and maps. Some materials are carried over from previous learning environments to accommodate transition, but most materials are specific to Planes of Development. All materials connect to Cosmic Education which is used to inspire, extend knowledge and consolidate. The elementary environment has resources for a child to research with, and a library for children to choose literature to read. It should be free of clutter and maintained daily by students. The walls are neutral as the material they are working on should be their focus, so little if nothing, is on the walls. The environment encourages self-direction, and independence. Checklists/work journals should be developed by students whenever possible. The classroom has multiple work areas for groups and individuals and there is room for children to lay out their work. Soft music may be played, low lighting/natural lighting may be used. Areas for students to take breaks and self-regulate. The outdoors and community are regularly used to enrich the learning. Student behaviour is appropriate, and routines are clearly established and followed. Students are active participants in maintaining the space.

- B. **Classroom Procedures** may vary slightly due to differences in personalities and styles of individual teachers and groups of students; however, the following are consistently seen in all classrooms:
- Students are invited into the classroom 15 minutes before 9am (the beginning of the school day) and may remain in the classroom for 15 minutes after 3:20pm (the end of the school day)
  - Students will develop a checklist/work log to help guide them in their work cycle
  - Daily schedules may be posted, so the child is aware of changes in the day
  - Snacking may occur throughout the day at either a designated spot or wherever possible
  - Students clean up after themselves when eating snacks or lunch
  - Students gather the materials they need to work on in Literacy, Mathematics, and Cultural Studies (social sciences, natural science, geography, zoology, botany, history, geography, astronomy, geology, biology, physical science, and chemistry). They share and use the materials and are responsible for cleaning up and maintaining the classroom and school

- Students may use the washroom when they need and go and get water as is necessary, but may be asked to let an adult know where they are going
- Students may opt to do a body or mind break as self-regulation
- Teachers may encourage students to do a mind or body break to help regulate
- Students will participate in a common outside time during the lunch hour
- Children freely move about the class and take breaks when needed
- Students may participate in additional outside times under the supervision of their teacher and other adults as is invited by the teacher
- Students will participate in Physical Education, Arts Education, and Core French by specialist teachers (often referred to as 'specials') when available
- Students requiring supervision before 8:45am or after 3:35pm will enroll in the Before and After school program
- A peace corner or peace strategy will be used to solve conflict if it should arise
- Students take turns speaking so that all students can offer a voice
- Students are invited for presentations on new or challenging concepts
- Students help each other to learn and grow in their learning community
- Students accept differences among learners and respect the diversity in their classrooms
- Students may teach one another and
- Third years (Grades 3 & 6) and Grade 8s will take on a leadership role in the classroom



### C. Roles of the Montessori Community Members

#### -Teacher

- Is a recognized SK teacher with a SK teaching certificate
- Is Montessori trained or is in training by a program recognized by the division. (NAMC, MACTE, AMI, AMS, CGMS are among some of the certified training centers or programs recognized by SPS)
- Designs and maintains beautiful environments, which provide easy access to all Montessori materials of the specific plane of development
- Displays Montessori materials in an orderly manner and are available to the child
- Is the dynamic link between the child and the prepared environment
- Serves as a guide
- Supporting and helping parents better understand Montessori philosophy and methodology
- Uses observation to identify a struggling learner, and intervenes with a "re-lesson"
- Provides individual meeting times with students to allow for verbal feedback on work and allow the child to describe any difficulty
- Offers self-directed learning and builds independence in their students
- Develops sound knowledge of the Montessori materials
- Teaches with concrete materials until the child demonstrates they are ready to transition naturally into abstract. Going from concrete, to pictorial, to abstract.
- Systematic Observer, Programmer, and Evaluator
- Partner with Parents-communication and assessment
- Consistent good example of desirable behavior-displays a sense of calm, grace, courtesy, and respect
- Peacemaker
- Presents key lessons to students
- Prepares Montessori materials which engage, extend, and help develop students understanding of concepts
- Connects SK Curricula to the Montessori materials and prepares new materials for shelves to teach SK Curricula concepts not in the Montessori classroom
- Helps promote "normalization" of the child
- Promotes a "community of learners" where everyone is being valued and taking a part in maintaining a positive community environment which is student directed.

#### -Parent

- Be aware of basic Montessori Philosophy
- Nurtures child to become independent
- Communicate with Teacher
- Inspire school and home roles in the child: school role-work, socialize, and develop academically; home role-play, positive family member, and enjoying non-academic practical and social activities and skills
- Treating students and one another with respect and helping to foster independence, peace and academic growth
- Believing in the capacity of all students
- Promote the idea of the Cosmic Education in the home, by making kids aware of their environmental surroundings

#### -Student

- Respect the classroom, materials, class members, community members, and world
- Respect the individuality and diversity of needs of all
- Use the work cycle time effectively and self-regulate as needed to be rigorous and productive as a learner
- Develop stamina as a self-directed learner
- Gain independence in the classroom, school, and world
- Approach learning and life with a growth mindset
- Help maintain a safe, inviting, and beautiful environment
- Share materials and teacher time with other students
- Help younger students to master and gain confidence in learning
- Respect the routines and procedures agreed upon by all in the classroom
- Ensure all have a voice in the classroom
- Contribute to a peaceful environment
- Respects other students' workspace and level of engagement

#### -EA (when one is present in the classroom)

- Helping Prepare the Classroom
- Monitoring and Assisting in the classroom
- Assisting students with their work
- Ensuring students are productively on task
- Circulating through students and attend to any pressing needs as needed
- Familiarize self with the Montessori materials
- Observing and Taking Notes
- Completing Checklists/Anecdotal Notes and other forms of information gathering as asked for by teachers
- Taking note of what works students have mastered for the teacher to then consider next lessons to teach
- Leading Students in Purposeful Body Breaks
- Circulating and set the tone for a peaceful, productive classroom especially when the teacher is giving individual or small group presentations-The golden rule of if one is down (teacher giving presentations) then one is up (EA circulating to set the tone)



#### -Other Adults (Parents, Visitors, and Staff in the School)

- Treating students and one another with respect and helping to foster independence, peace and academic growth
- Believing in the capacity of all students

#### -Administration

- Supporting an environment that is conducive to teach children and honouring the Montessori Methodology
- Using Peaceful Conflict Resolution in any disciplinary situations
- Seeing mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow
- Being role models for both teachers and students alike
- Observing in classrooms and giving constructive feedback which would promote the Montessori method and philosophy as well as applicable AFT components
- Being present and having a positive presence in the school
- Knowing, Valuing, and Believing in Students Holistically
- Working together with families, staff and students to provide an environment that is positive for ALL
- Communicating school events/news with staff and parents
- Offering a wide variety of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities
- Serving as a liaison with the SCC, Home & School, Community Association, MMS, Maggie's Daycare, and Playground Committee
- Supporting Montessori Professional Development for Staff Members as well as Complimentary Research Based PD
- Help develop student reports that reflect a Montessori environment and at the same time connect SK curricula content
- Promoting first the use of the Montessori materials and the method that goes along with the program as well as external avenues being explored based on need
- Seeks knowledge of the sequencing of materials in the different areas of the class
- Seeks to attend some Montessori PD to have a better understanding when available

#### D. Curricula

Montessori Cosmic Curriculum\*, Montessori Peace Education\*\*, as well as Saskatchewan Curricula are taught in all classrooms. All provincial requirements are fulfilled.

#### E. Methodology consists of many critical components being present in the classroom and comes from Maria Montessori's philosophy. We would expect the following in Montessori classrooms:

- Multi-aged classrooms
  - Lower Elementary-Grades 1-3
  - Upper Elementary-Grades 4-6
  - Middle Years Community-Grades 7/8
- Students creating a daily/weekly checklist/work log to guide their work cycle

- Students participating in a 2.5+ hour uninterrupted work cycle, keeping in mind, children need to grow this time after school breaks. Teachers work toward developing student stamina.
- Students becoming self-directed, independent learners in the classroom, school, and world
- Practical Life Experiences (Fostering Independence) such as: maintaining the classroom environment, organizing their day, gardening...
- Best Place Learning (Learning in Nature/Outdoors as much as possible)
- Students remaining in a three-year cycle with the same teacher (if possible, in elementary years)
- Following the child-individualized learning
- Freedom within limits-the child chooses work they have had experience with or had a lesson on
- Lessons with three-part card work until they understand how to use the material
- Knowledge happens through the hands (by doing/experiencing)
- Concrete materials are used to “plant the seeds” of further knowledge. For example, the binomial and trinomial cube in CASA first start out as a sensorial work. In Lower Elementary, nomenclature is given to its parts. In Upper EI and Middle Years, the concepts learned are applied and consolidated and applied in learning an algorithm of the binomial and trinomial equation.
- Child transitions naturally from the concrete to the abstract
- Diverse learners in each classroom with accommodations for the success of all
- Pull out and/or Push-in Resource Support may happen in collaboration with the family and classroom teacher
- Autodidactic Montessori Materials and Teaching/Learning
- Free choice of movement and of work within pre-set limits (kinesthetic learning)
- Work based on the child’s biological, personal, and individual rhythm, based on the planes of development, and skill level
- Small group lessons are the norm
- The Great Lessons are given in large group, as are most initial lessons of the cultural work
- Small group and partner work are a way for students to learn how to collaborate effectively
- Groups can be designed by teacher and sometimes by students
- Teacher as facilitator and guide
- Respect for the materials, adults, other children, and one-self
- Respect for the environment within the school and the wider environment outside of the school
- Adults observing children as they work to guide them appropriately and prepare the environment for them to learn
- Intrinsic motivation is developed within the students
- Class meetings may be held

#### Is the SPS Montessori Program the right fit for your child?

- CAN YOUR CHILD LEARN INDEPENDENTLY?
- CAN THEY BE A SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER?
- CAN THEY MAKE RESPONSIBLE CHOICES ABOUT THEIR LEARNING?
- CAN THEY ORGANIZE THEIR DAY ON THEIR OWN?
- CAN THEY DEVELOP STAMINA TO MAINTAIN THE WORK CYCLE?
- CAN YOUR CHILD ASK FOR HELP IF THEY NEED IT?
- CAN THEY BE COMFORTABLE TAKING ON A LEADERSHIP ROLE?
- CAN YOUR CHILD BENEFIT FROM A MENTOR TEACHER GUIDING THEM?
- CAN THEY MAINTAIN FOCUS WITHOUT DIRECT INSTRUCTION WITHIN A BUSY ENVIRONMENT?
- CAN YOUR CHILD COLLABORATE WITH STUDENTS IN GRADES ABOVE AND BELOW THEM?



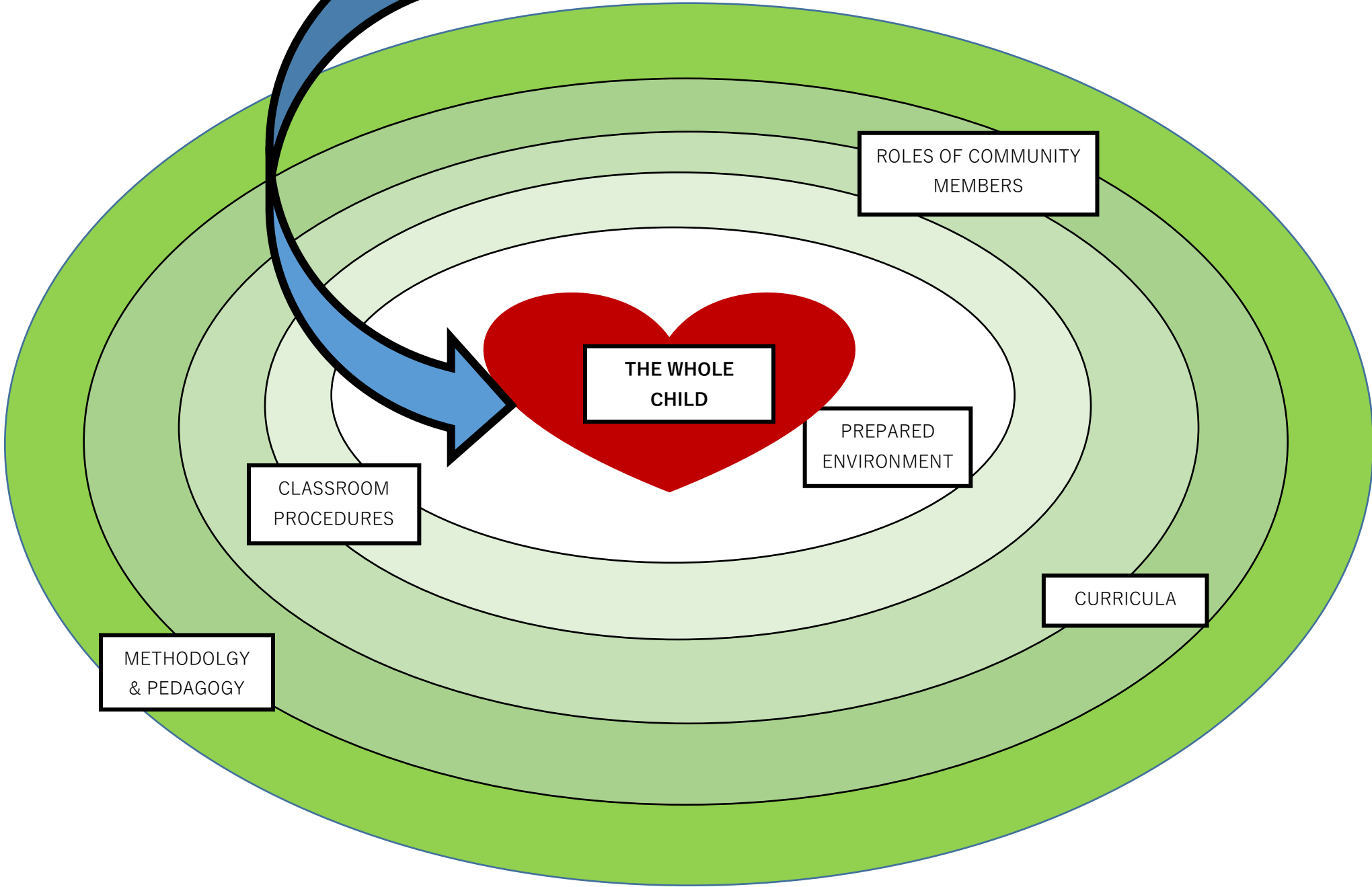
**Note: Even if students do not possess all of these qualities right now, with practice, do you see the student thriving in this type of environment? Additional supports available to a student in any SPS school would also be available to a student in the Montessori Program. The Montessori Program is inclusive and encourages diversity.**

- There is no tuition for students attending the school division program. \$100 is collected for school supplies. All supplies are community supplies. Students require proper indoor footwear and outdoor clothing for all weather.
- The Montessori program uses a lottery system to determine new students each calendar year. Preference is given to all students who reside in Saskatoon city limits for Montessori Grades 1-8. SPS Montessori Grade 1 will be an open lottery for all students regardless of previous school experience (Private or Public). Preference will be given to students who attend Saskatoon Public Schools for Montessori Grades 2-8.
- The Montessori Program is open to students with or without prior Montessori experience. Previous Montessori experience is an asset, especially at the upper elementary and middle years levels.

This document was developed collaboratively with the input of administration, staff, and parents at City Park School in Saskatoon Public Schools in May 2020. It is a living document and will evolve as needed with all members moving forward together in the work.



The  Heart of our SPS Montessori Program



THE WHOLE  
CHILD

ROLES OF COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS

PREPARED  
ENVIRONMENT

CURRICULA

METHODOLGY  
& PEDAGOGY

CLASSROOM  
PROCEDURES