



Agape Christian Montessori School

Program Statement

ABOUT US Agape Christian Montessori School (ACMS) is a Christian, nurturing, fun, and supportive learning environment for all children and families. Each child has the opportunity to experience academic and personal success in God's love, through the teachers' modeling of Christ-likeness at work. This means that we are committed to providing a friendly, gentle, understanding, and forgiving environment, in which the child is holistically enriched. We are committed to treating children with respect and dignity to help them develop to their full potential.

Our program aims to meet the individual needs of children ages 18 months to 5 years through our Toddler and CASA programs. We are located at the Japanese Gospel Church of Toronto, in Scarborough, Ontario. Welcome to ACMS!

VIEW OF THE CHILD We believe that, by God's creative design, each child is competent; capable of complex thought; curious about the world; and rich in potential¹. Central to our work at ACMS is diversity, equity, and inclusion². We welcome families of all backgrounds and children with diverse abilities.

Maria Montessori said, "Our aim...is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core."³ Children are natural learners, and our educators prepare a safe environment that stimulates the child's curiosity, and allows the child to take initiative to explore and engage in learning.

HEALTH, SAFETY, NUTRITION, AND WELL-BEING Our program provides a safe and nurturing environment for students to learn and develop. Children are most ready to learn when they are healthy. Our meals are provided by a Canadian catering company that follows the Canadian Food Guide, and children are introduced to a variety of foods. In order to prevent the spread of germs, our classrooms and washrooms are cleaned and sanitized regularly. We have adequate supervision and security measures on our campus grounds so that you can feel safe, knowing that your child is in trustworthy care. Throughout our daily program, we teach our children how to make healthy choices so that they can self-regulate and balance their spiritual, physical, social, and emotional well-being.

POSITIVE AND RESPONSIVE We recognize the importance of clear and constructive communication in creating positive and responsive interactions between children, parents, child-care providers,

¹How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)

²Excerpts from "ELECT" (2014)

³To Educate the Human Potential (1989)

INTERACTIONS	<p>and staff. All staff are considered role models for the children and use professional and positive language at all times. Our teachers support language and literacy development by teaching the child reading and writing skills according to the child’s readiness, and by teaching a wide range of vocabulary that covers topics across the curriculum. Children are encouraged to communicate with their peers, teachers, and parents about what they learn. Responsive conversations happen when children bring tasks home, warn their peers to be careful, resolve conflicts, or express what they have or need. We believe that children have a natural curiosity about the world and those in it. We encourage children to interact positively with different communities of a variety of age groups by learning about diversity and showing acts of kindness.</p>
COMMUNICATION AND SELF-REGULATION	<p>Children are ready to engage in learning when they are “calm, focused, and alert.”⁴ ACMS supports emotional wellness and self-regulation by teaching children to identify a variety of emotions by their expressions and behaviours, and to practice healthy coping skills so that they can return to an emotionally calm state. This allows them to self-monitor, and empathize for their peers. Our teachers use a variety of teaching resources to teach self-regulation skills, including social stories and artwork. ACMS also seeks professional guidance and resource support in order to provide the most effective teaching practices.</p>
EXPLORATION, PLAY, AND INQUIRY	<p>Children are given opportunities to discover and learn new information by exploring with different materials. As they explore, they engage in inquiry when they “test out ideas and work on solving problems.”⁵ We also allot time for children to play freely because “play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance.”⁶</p> <p>The Montessori Method</p> <p>The Montessori curriculum has five areas: Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language and Literacy, and Culture and Science. The materials are designed so that children discover concepts in these areas as they interact with the materials. The teacher is only part of the learning environment as a guide and facilitator. Using the Montessori method supports inquiry- and play-based learning because it gives the child the ability to choose and initiate.</p>
CHILD’S INITIATIVE AND ADULT’S SUPPORT	<p>Our program is designed to follow the child’s interests and developmental readiness. ACMS teachers ask open-ended prompting questions that encourage the children to direct their own learning. Our thematic lesson plans allow for flexibility, extension, and depth, based on child initiative. When a child shows curiosity in one learning area, the teachers support the child’s learning by relating information from the child’s</p>

⁴ How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)

⁵Key Terms by May Joliffe, Rockwood Consulting (2016)

⁶Excerpts from “ELECT” (2014)

experience and applying it to the world.

POSITIVE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT

We create a space where children feel joyful, creative, and secure so that they are able to learn comfortably. Every child has an important voice to contribute and everyone has an equal opportunity to inclusion. All the materials and learning spaces are shared so that every child belongs to the class and school community. Children also work and play in groups and have opportunities to practice how to share and take turns, and express themselves to their peers. Our teachers provide descriptive and positive feedback so that children develop their competency and self-awareness.

The physical environment is clean, uncluttered, and conducive to learning. The Montessori method emphasizes that a learning environment must allow children the freedom of movement and exploration, while providing enough structure and order to direct children to engage with the curriculum. This kind of environment is what some may call a “third teacher” that “will be responsive to the children’s interests, provide opportunities for children to make their thinking visible and then foster further learning and engagement.”⁷ ACMS fosters a respect for the learning environment by encouraging children to clean up after themselves and be responsible for their individual belongings.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The daily program at ACMS promotes the child’s physical, mental, and emotional health by including adequate time for indoor and outdoor play, naps, and quiet time. The schedules are designed to cater to the needs of the individual age groups. Outdoor play creates opportunities for children to interact with, explore, and observe changes in nature; learn social skills by playing games with their peers; develop gross-motor skills and leadership skills by participating in active free play; and extend their depth of learning by playing games that relate to their thematic classroom lessons. Indoors, children have opportunities to learn on their own, and in small-group and large-group settings. Children participate in quiet learning activities during Montessori learning periods, French, reading, free-play, Bible circle, music, and show-and-tell circle. Our daily program also includes a quiet period so that children can nap and rest. All the activities in our daily program allow children an opportunity to exercise choice so that they can build self-awareness and competency by engaging in self-expression.

Every day, teachers lead children in daily biblical devotions and gospel songs. It is important to ACMS that children experience God’s love regularly and consistently see Christ’s character through their teachers.

PARENT
INVOLVEMENT

ACMS believes that partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of children⁸. Therefore, we enjoy involving the family communities of our students by inviting family members as guest

⁷Capacity Building Series: The Third Teacher (2012)

⁸Excerpts from “ELECT” (2014)

speakers to volunteer, or share about their roles in society and in their families. We value clear, frequent, and consistent communication with parents so that they are informed and supportive of their child's development. Parents are always welcome to share concerns and ideas and ACMS has a number of communication methods available for parents to do so. We consciously represent and respect the diversity of our community by inviting parents to share with us their celebratory holidays. Our diverse staff speaks multiple languages and works to create positive and trusting relationships with parents and families.

LOCAL COMMUNITY
PARTNERS

ACMS is always looking for opportunities to supplement classroom learning by making connections with our local community. We go for regular community walks so that the children are aware of and interested in the Senior's Home across the street and the nearby nature trail. We want to foster children's healthy curiosity, wonder, and empathy for different kinds of community groups so that they will learn to follow Christ's example to love and serve all kinds of people. Children are encouraged to share about their own community and milieu by bringing artifacts from home to share with their peers. We also know where to get support for a child or family within the community by connecting them to community resources and specialists that cater to their needs. We have a Special Needs consultant from Community Living Toronto that works as part of our team to provide proactive strategies and support advocacy for high quality, inclusive child care.

CONTINUOUS
PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING

ACMS provides a positive work environment for the staff so that they are free to be sincere and attentive towards the children and their families. We support our staff by providing online and community services for continuous professional learning. Staff can gain development in areas such as understanding child readiness, self-regulation and child mental health, and behavioural and learning exceptionalities. Our teachers are updated with the newest teaching trends supported by the Ministry of Education so that they are competent to reach the needs of every student that enrolls in our school. The teachers also communicate with one another on a regular basis to support each other and develop effective teaching strategies together, so that teachers never feel isolated within their own classroom. All the staff work as a team to provide the best care for the child.
