



Queen of Angels

MONTESSORI

Why five days per week for preschool age students?

Introduction

A multi-age preschool program that meets five half-days per week provides a solid foundation for children to build trust and benefit from an enriched school community. Multi-age grouping provides a more natural, family-style atmosphere, offering children more opportunities than same-age groupings to interact with, learn from, and help other children. Whether mom or dad works outside of the home or not, going to school each weekday provides **consistency** and **predictability** to the child's daily routine and offers him or her the greatest opportunity for smooth, spontaneous learning.

Community in the classroom is built on a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, day-by-day basis. Children who do not attend class on a daily basis miss out on daily interaction with classroom guides and children alike. This in turn makes it more difficult for the child to become comfortable with the classroom culture, rules, guides, and students. As children's social and physical needs are met and they feel safe and included in a classroom community, only then can they begin to thrive intellectually in the school setting. It is our firm belief that the multi-age, five-day Montessori classroom provides this for young children.

Benefits of a Half-Day/Five-Day Preschool Program

- **Predictable Routine:** The five-day program provides a predictable routine. Routines help children feel safe and settled. The child knows what to expect and is better able to focus.
- **Internal Order:** External order leads to internal order. Once the child's outer world is predictable and ordered, the child can focus on developing his inner order. The child is in a sensitive period for the development of inner order, and the five-day program, combined with a carefully-prepared environment and a well-trained Montessori guide, supports the child in developing internal order.
- **Rich Environment:** The Montessori preschool offers a rich learning environment. The five-day program gives the child time to explore all areas of the Montessori environment, with ample opportunities for individual and small-group lessons and repetition of activities.
- **Independence:** The five-day program provides time for the child to develop independence. At the age of three, the child is developmentally ready to enter a community outside of the home. The five-day program gives the child the opportunity to develop an identity of her own, outside of the family. The child also grows in independence and self-care. Montessori children learn to prepare snack, sweep, mop, arrange flowers, clean up their own work, put on their coat, pack their school bag, etc. Often, parents perform these tasks for

- their young children without thinking, yet these are the very things that the young child delights in learning to do independently. The five-day program gives the child time to develop these skills.
- **Friendships:** The five-day program gives the child time to develop closer friendships and work with a variety of classmates throughout the week. It also helps the child learn grace and courtesy skills that enable her to interact politely with other children and adults outside of the home.

One Parent's Experience

One QAMS mother whose two children attended our five-day program shared these thoughts:

Like all preschoolers, Ryan has days where he is very focused and eager, rambunctious days, lazy days, social days and days when he needs more down time ... [T]he program at QAMS is so rich that the five-day program gives Ryan the time and flexibility to explore a wide variety of activities, many that reinforce each other, during his week. The full week gives lessons time to unfold.

Socially, the extra time in the classroom provides Ryan with the opportunity to get to know and work with more of his classmates. QAMS is like a family to him and he loves his friends, teachers, and parent volunteers.

Children who attend a five-day/half-day program enjoy the best of both worlds. They thrive in the routine and richness of the morning Montessori program, and then enjoy the rest of their day in the loving embrace of the home. Many three- and four-year olds wake up on Saturday and eagerly ask, "Is there school today!?!"

In Summary

We have found that young children do best when their schedule is consistent and they can safely know where they will be each day. This gives them a sense of security, and helps them to become independent. They develop good self-esteem and confidence. They enjoy coming to school, and build each new day upon the accomplishments of the last.