Environment

- **Three-year, mixed-age classes** include children ages 3-6 in the same classroom.
- **Beauty and order** characterize the physical environment.
- **Calm, non-stimulating wall decor** supports deep concentration.
- **Larger class sizes** support children in learning from each other as well as from the guide (teacher). Some programs may utilize a Locally Designed Option in order to provide class sizes larger than 20.
- The environment provides **connections to nature**, either through direct access to the outdoors or by bringing natural elements inside (live plants and animals; wood and natural materials).

Children

- **Individual and small-group instruction** predominates. Many children may be working and playing at individual tables or mats on the floor; others may be working and playing in pairs or small groups. Typically, the guide works with just one or a few children at a time while the other children play and work independently.
- **A quiet hum of conversation** is ongoing, and children are free to move about the classroom.
- Children are engaged in **Montessori activities**, which include activities of practical life; activities for refining the senses; and language, mathematics, and cultural activities. The Montessori curriculum includes detailed lessons addressing all the domains and standards of the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework.
• Children practice **self-discipline and courtesy**, waiting for a turn with a desired activity, walking carefully around others’ work, offering help to classmates, and more. Social-emotional development is strengthened through direct lessons as well as through multiple informal opportunities for self-discipline to emerge.

• Challenging, interesting, hands-on **literacy and math activities** engage children’s attention and concentration.

• Children have a **high degree of choice** about what to work on, where and with whom to work, and how long to engage with any particular activity.

• Children with **special needs and abilities are fully included** in the Montessori classroom and supported through push-in services if needed.

**Adults**

• At least one lead guide (teacher) holds a **Montessori credential** from an AMS, AMI or a MACTE-accredited teacher preparation program.

• **Observation** is a key tool for assessment, particularly formative assessment.

• Adults **focus on the strengths and capabilities** of the children and families. Each child’s inner teacher is honored.

• **Parents/families are viewed as children’s first and best teachers.** The program places priority on knowing the children's families, being in relationship with the families, respecting the families’ expertise and helping them value their own knowledge.

• Adults support children and families in a **culturally responsive** way.

**Structure of the Day**

• **Long blocks of uninterrupted time** for children to choose their own activities (ideally 3 hours at a time) support concentration and minimize transitions.

• **Very little time is spent in whole-group gatherings.**

• **Children participate actively in transitions**, cleaning up their own work, setting the table for meals, and more.