



MONTESSORI
SCHOOL OF EVERGREEN

Toddler to Primary

Parent Transition Guide

2026/2027 School Year

Dear MSE Rising Primary Families,

As your child prepares to transition into the Primary Community at MSE (whether coming from MSE's Toddler Community or joining us as a new family at the start of the school year or midyear), we want to provide some helpful information now to support you through this exciting change so that the transition is smooth for both your child and you.

MSE will have *four* Primary Classrooms in the 2026/27 school year: two at our Troutdale Campus and two at our Marshdale Campus. Each is led by a trained Montessori Lead Teacher with years of experience working with children ages 3 to 6. Our entire Primary Team, including assistant teachers, holds the required licensing credentials to work with children in this age group and training to support your child's growth and development. Your child is in excellent hands!

While your child's teacher will reach out closer to the start of the school year, **we want to help you begin preparing for the shift you may experience as a parent**, especially if you're transitioning from MSE's Toddler Community or an outside child care center, where there are some key differences to expect.

This packet offers insight into our Primary Community and guidance for the transition. While your child is well-supported and cared for during their transition at MSE, the *parent experience* through the transition sometimes takes parents by surprise. We recognize the emotions and nervousness that can come with this new chapter and we are here to support you every step of the way.

Warmly,
Casey LeGalley, Director of Admissions & Enrollment



From the Toddler Community to the Primary Community

Key Differences to Know from the Toddler Community to Primary.

Teacher-to-Student Ratios

As children transition to the Primary Community, the teacher-to-student ratio shifts from 1:5 in Toddler Classrooms to a maximum of 1:10 in Primary Classrooms. Each MSE classroom is unique in size and layout, and while the number of students in each classroom may vary, the 1:10 ratio is never exceeded. Our experienced Montessori Primary Team ensure every child receives thoughtful guidance through a mixture of individual, small group, and whole-class instruction. What truly sets MSE apart in our Evergreen community is the intentional, **Montessori-based, multi-age classroom model** - where older students take on leadership roles and serve as mentors for younger peers. ***This structure supports independence and slightly larger classroom settings***, making MSE truly unique among other schools.

Interactions with Other MSE Staff, Visitors, & Students

In the Primary Community, your child may mention teachers from the other Primary Classroom, as students share recess time. They may also refer to MSE staff members who aren't directly assigned to their class but step in to support students as needed in the Primary Communities. Members of our admin team regularly assist in classrooms and during recess, and your child will also interact with specialist teachers, substitutes, and volunteers. All MSE staff working closely with children, including toileting guidance and nap time, hold the appropriate credentials from our Early Childhood Education Licensing Agency, and all team members have been background checked. From time to time, your child may also briefly encounter visitors touring the school with a member of our Admin Team, family members visiting to observe or celebrate a birthday, or older students from Lower Elementary or our Upper School who enjoy spending time with MSE's younger students.

Bigger Classroom Environment

Primary classrooms are more spacious and designed for children ages 3 to 6. Furniture, shelving, and restrooms are thoughtfully scaled to support growing independence. The classroom will feel larger to your child at first, and in a few short weeks, it will feel normal to them. As a parent, you may also begin to feel like your child is entering a "school classroom" for the first time, which may feel like a significant shift.

Multi-Age Community

One of the most unique features of the Montessori Method is the mixed-age classroom. While your toddler experienced children ages 15 months to three-years-old, your three-year-old will be learning alongside four-, five-, and six-year-olds. At first, it may feel surprising to see your child as the youngest, but this setup is intentional and very beneficial for this next phase of development. Younger child will benefit from observing older peers, while older students grow into mentorship and leadership roles. Over time, your child will not only adapt but thrive - eventually becoming one of the confident leaders who once inspired them!

Beginning the Process of Transitioning to Primary

First Steps Into Primary

Families of students starting in a Primary Classroom in the fall can expect an email from their child's teacher a few weeks before school begins. This welcome message will include key information about the classroom, school routines, and the upcoming year. Our Primary teachers take slightly different approaches to welcoming new students, but all are designed to create a warm, supportive introduction for children and families.

Welcome Opportunities

To help support a smooth start to the school year, Primary classroom teachers may offer a welcome opportunity before the first day of school. Families may be invited to attend a Classroom Open House, where they can visit the classroom, meet the teacher, and connect with other parents, or participate in a one-on-one Meet & Greet, which offers a scheduled time to tour the classroom and get acquainted with the teacher.

What Is Phase-In Week?

Similar to the Toddler Community, Phase-In Week is a gentle start to the school year designed to help children feel confident and secure in their new Primary environment. Your child's specific Phase-In schedule will be shared over the summer. This thoughtfully designed transition supports a strong and confident start to your child's school journey! MSE's Family Calendar can be found on the school website under the **COMMUNITY** tab (password: **mse2627**).

How It Works:

Children attend half-day sessions in small groups (typically 6–9 students). This allows them to:

- Get to know their teacher and new classmates
- Receive basic lessons that will help them settle into their routines in the classroom and adjust to the new classroom setting
- Learn daily routines and expectations in a calm, supportive way

For Midyear Transitions

- Internal Transitions: If your child is currently starting school in MSE's Toddler Community and transitioning into Primary midway through the year, the Toddler and Primary teachers will collaborate to guide your family through the transition a few weeks leading up to the transition.
- New to MSE Midyear: For new Primary families joining midyear, your child's Primary Teacher will coordinate a personalized phase-in plan to ease them into the classroom experience around or shortly after the new calendar year.

The First Few Weeks in Primary

As your child begins their journey into the Primary Community, you may find yourself experiencing emotions you hadn't anticipated. This is completely normal. Just like your child, you're transitioning too, and these first few weeks (or even months) can be filled with adjustment for everyone involved. Leaving the comfort of a familiar classroom or care routine can stir up big feelings. While exciting, it's also a time of vulnerability and growth for everyone.

Some common behaviors in your child you may notice during this transition include:

Mood Changes

Your child may seem more reserved, sad, frustrated, or clingy during drop-off. This can be tough to experience, but it's common and a temporary part of adjusting to the shift. Talking openly about their feelings and offering gentle encouragement at home can provide a reassuring anchor.

Sleep Disruptions

It's not unusual for children to have trouble napping or sleeping through the night as they process new routines and sensory input at school. Their little minds and bodies are working hard to adapt, which can lead to fatigue and increased emotional sensitivity. They may also struggle to nap at school in the beginning weeks. Like anything else, this will improve with consistency and practice.

Temporary Regressions

You might notice meltdowns at home or behaviors you thought were long past. This is simply your child working through all the new experiences they're encountering, especially as they navigate new social interactions with other students. This is a beautiful parenting opportunity for you to connect with your child and validate their feelings at home. It takes time to build stamina in a new classroom setting. Hang in there - it gets better! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to send an email to your teacher.

Social Hesitation

Your child may initially seem quiet or unsure when it comes to making new friends. As hard as this can be to watch, it is completely natural. The beauty of rising from a familiar level to a new and unfamiliar level is that it builds a child's grit and perseverance. Rest assured, teachers are gently guiding social connections and helping children feel welcomed at school when you're not there. Before long, you'll start hearing stories about new friends and classroom adventures!

Most importantly: these behaviors are all temporary and completely normal. We're here to support you through each step of this transition; emotionally, practically, and with deep care for your child's individual needs.



Ways to Prepare as a Parent

As your child moves from the Toddler Community to Primary, the classroom environment begins to feel more like “school,” with increased independence, structure, and responsibility.

Back-to-School Night

In the Toddler Community, families receive home visits due to the age and developmental needs of younger children. *In the Primary Community, however, families are encouraged to attend Back-to-School Night, a key event designed to help you feel informed and oriented as your child transitions into their Primary Classroom.*

All families, including those joining midyear, are strongly encouraged to attend Back to school Night for their child’s Primary Classroom. Teachers will share important information about classroom routines, nap and toileting expectations, clothing tips, and ways to support your child’s growth and independence at home. While all of our classrooms are grounded in the Montessori Method, each has its own unique rhythm and daily flow, making this event especially helpful and informative.

We also encourage you to participate in any Parent Education workshops and classes offered by our school. These parent education opportunities are intended to support our parent community and are offered free of charge to all MSE families each year. Keep an eye out for more details at the start of the school year!



Toileting Independence in the Primary Classroom

As your child moves into Primary, toileting independence might feel like a big step. While it may come with a few bumps early on, with partnership and practice, most children quickly gain confidence. Here's what you need to know:

Wiping Independently

Primary teachers offer verbal guidance only (especially after bowel movements) *but do not wipe students* unless there is an urgent situation. *We recommend practicing wiping at home months before the school year begins or in preparation for a midyear transition.* Parents can focus on:

- Talking through steps (how much toilet paper to take, how do fold it to keep hands clean, using a low mirror at home to help them see, etc.)
- Celebrating effort!
- Building trust and confidence in their abilities

Accidents Happen

Accidents are normal, especially during transitions. When they occur, children are guided (verbally) to change independently. If frequent accidents occur, teachers will connect with parents to create a supportive plan for the child.

Listening to Their Body

Teachers may offer reminders throughout the day, but eventually, children will be expected to recognize their own body's cues and speak up when they need to go. You can support this at home by talking about body signals and encouraging bathroom independence - especially when out and about.

Classroom Bathrooms

Bathrooms are child-friendly and designed for independence. Doors may be left slightly open for supervision, but privacy is also respected for students. The toilets are larger than the ones in the Toddler classrooms, however, some children may still use toilet inserts as they transition. All staff members who may assist children in the bathroom are fully background checked, trained, and meet all Early Childhood Education (ECE) requirements set by Colorado state licensing.

Handwashing

Handwashing is taught and practiced daily - after toileting, before meals, and after outdoor play. At home, continue this habit to reinforce the routine at transitions and every bathroom use.

Practice Makes Progress

In general, children are expected to manage toileting independently, but not perfectly. The goal is steady progress, not perfection. *Your partnership, support, and consistent work at home makes all the difference.*

Nap Time Adjustments

*Nap and quiet time take place after lunch, typically starting around 1:00 PM. While each campus and classroom may vary slightly, all Primary students are supported in finding rest during this important part of the day. It's common for nap time to feel challenging at first, especially in the early weeks of Primary. **This adjustment can sometimes lead to temporary sleep regressions at home.** Please know this is a normal phase and usually resolves within the first month or two as children settle into their new routine.*

Rest Expectations

As children grow during their time in the Primary classroom, many naturally begin to phase out of their afternoon naps. In alignment with Colorado licensing regulations, all Primary students (excluding those in the Kinder Year) participate in a daily rest period. *During this time, all Primary students must rest quietly on their mats for at least 30 minutes.* Some children continue to nap for the full rest period, while others gradually begin to wake earlier or simply rest without sleeping. For students beginning to drop their afternoon nap, teachers provide quiet, calming activities to engage in after the rest period. Teachers closely observe each child's natural sleep rhythm and *only wake a napping child when the rest period is ending.*

Classroom Setup

Nappers will remain in their home classrooms with blackout blinds and a sound machine. "Resters" move to a slightly lighter space in their home classrooms for quiet work and activities. Alongside teachers, Kinder Years may help younger peers as they transition from rest back into an afternoon routine.

Toileting & Underwear

All children use the toilet before nap. Pull-ups are not permitted in the Primary Classroom. If your child still naps in pull-ups, we encourage transitioning to underwear a few weeks/months before starting Primary. Teachers are prepared for occasional accidents to happen during nap time in the beginning.

Comfort Items

Each child may bring one small comfort item that fits inside their wet bag. Small blankets that can fit into a wet bag are allowed. *Please no stuffed animals, toys, or large pillows.* Sheets will be provided. All nap items must go home weekly to be laundered.

This daily rest time (whether your child is still napping or not) is a valuable opportunity for them to relax, reset, and build self-regulation skills.

Snack, Lunch, and Social Time in Primary

Socialization & Recess

At MSE, Primary students from both classrooms on each campus socialize during recess and lunch. After the morning work cycle, children head outside to play (Half Day pick-up is at 12:30 PM on the playground). While we follow the motto, "There's no bad weather, only bad clothing," lunch is held indoors on very cold or rainy days. These shared times help children get to know other Primary students, teachers, and staff beyond their classroom communities.

Lunch Routine

Lunch begins around 12:00 PM, with younger students eating first to help them settle in, followed by Kindergartners. *Please pack a larger lunch than your child may be used to - morning snack is lighter than in MSE's Toddler Program.*

Snack at School

Primary snack is largely provided by the school: typically cheese and crackers, with occasional fruit/veggie contributions from families (via sign-up). Children serve themselves and eat independently or in pairs, building autonomy and grace and courtesy skills.

What to Pack:

- A lunchbox your child can open and close independently (Bentgo or Lunchbot boxes are great!)
- Food that your child can manage on their own - no wrappers, pouches, or hard-to-peel fruits
- Refrigeration and microwaves are **not available, however, warm food in a thermos container are welcome.**
- Teachers will let you know whether to pack a water bottle or if your child will be using classroom-provided cups



Communication in the Primary Program: *What to Expect*

As your child moves from the Toddler Community to the Primary Program, you may notice a slight shift in how teachers communicate with families. Here's what you can expect:

Regular Updates

Primary teachers may send brief weekly or monthly updates highlighting classroom activities and learning themes. Unlike in the Toddler Community, where regular updates supported children still developing language skills, Primary students are encouraged to share about their day themselves. Parents can expect fewer photos of their child and more photos that provide an overview of the classroom community and snapshot of what children are doing in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to ask open-ended questions at home to spark conversations with their child.

Conferences & Reports

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held twice a year for all Primary and Kinder students. Progress Reports are distributed *once during the school year for Primary 1 & Primary 2 students (and twice a year for Kinder students)*.

Individual Communication

If there is something important you'd like to share about your child, please refrain from discussing it openly in front of them. Children at this age are highly perceptive and may internalize what they hear, which can unintentionally increase their anxiety or intensify any challenges they are facing. On our end, if anything urgent arises, your child's teacher will contact you directly via email or phone.

Communication Expectations at Drop-Off & Pick-Up

Because of the larger class sizes and busy transitions in busy car line procedures in Primary, *teachers may not always be available for casual check-ins at these times*. For more in-depth updates, please reach out via email or schedule a time to meet with your child's teacher. Email is the best way to contact your child's teacher. If a longer conversation is needed, they'll suggest a time to meet.



Car Line in Primary

*As your child transitions from the Toddler Community to Primary, one of the biggest changes is using car line for both drop-off and pick-up. **Full car line instructions, traffic flow maps, and logistics will be shared prior to the school year.***

Drop-Off

Separation anxiety is normal at this age, and the best support you can offer is a quick, confident goodbye. When you part with positivity, it reassures your child that they're safe and capable. Lingering (even with the best intentions) can actually increase anxiety and make goodbyes harder. If your child is upset, please don't worry. We'll comfort them, help them settle in, and send a quick message or call to let you know they're doing well. Thank you for partnering with us to make drop-off a smooth and reassuring experience!

- A teacher or admin staff member will greet your child and open the car door.
- Children will hop out independently, grab their backpack, and walk into school on their own. This encourages independence and builds self-confidence.
- For children in car seats, staff will assist with helping them out. **Parents are not to exit the car.**
- You may be asked to sign your child in via an MSE staff member.
- **Tears are normal at first!** If needed, a staff member will gently help your child out and escort them into the building for a smooth transition. This almost always goes away after the first few weeks.
- While the line is longer, the process for drop-off is generally quicker in Primary than in the Toddler Community.

Dismissal/Pick-Up

- A teacher will walk your child to your car.
- Parents are required to load their child into the car and safely buckle them into the carseat before leaving. **MSE staff cannot buckle car seats.** *Parents* are responsible for securing their child before driving off property.

Help Your Child Prepare:

- Start practicing getting in and out of the car seat independently before they enter the Primary classroom.



We are here to support you! Please reach out with any questions:

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THANK YOU!