

*Helena Public Schools
Helena, Montana*

Montessori Program

Handbook

2022-2023

Montessori Handbook

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History of Montessori Program Helena Public Schools

The development of a Montessori Program in School District #1 began in the fall of 1990. It has grown since that time to include three locations. Each location offers two lower elementary and one upper elementary classroom. This configuration provides the opportunity for students to be enrolled throughout their elementary education in grades one-five.

1988-1990	Helena parents/community advocate for Montessori education
May, 1990	The Helena Board of Trustees accept proposal
1990-1991	First lower elementary class (grades 1-3, ages 6-9) implemented - Central
1991-1992	Second lower elementary class (grades 1-3, ages 6-9) implemented –Central
1993-1994	Third class (upper elementary, grades 4-5, ages 9-12) implemented - Central
1994-1995	Fourth lower elementary class (grades 1-3, ages 6-9) implemented - Lincoln, Jefferson, Smith
1996-1997	Fifth class (upper elementary, grades 4-5, ages 9-12) implemented - Central, Smith
1998 -1999	Lower elementary class identified and elementary Montessori continuum available at Central and Smith Schools for students in grades 1-5 (6 classrooms)
2005-2006	Lower elementary class (grades 1-3. ages 6-9) implemented at Broadwater School
2008-2009	Second lower elementary class (grades 1+3, ages 6-9) implemented at Broadwater School
2009-2010	Upper elementary class (grades 4-5. ages 9-12) added at Broadwater School

Helena Public Schools Montessori Program Guidelines

Enrollment

The Montessori Program is an educational option for students in grades 1-5 regardless of their HPS attendance area. It is available to all students in the Helena Public Schools through a lottery system. All children participating in the lottery must be a resident within the Helena-School District boundaries and/or currently enrolled in a HSD Kindergarten. There will be 36 guaranteed openings for rising 1st graders who enter the annual lottery. Families receiving seats outside their home boundary area will sign a boundary exception form to attend the designated Montessori school.

Lottery Records and Student Lists

The District Montessori Coordinator will maintain lottery records for the current and previous annual drawings. A list of students who participated in the lottery but were not selected will be maintained on a numeric “wait list”.

“Wait List”

Should any openings in Montessori classrooms occur during the school year, the District Montessori Coordinator or building principal will notify families on the waiting list in the order their names were drawn in the lottery. If a family does not wish to take the seat offered, then that child’s name will be moved to the end of the waiting list and the next family on the list will be offered the open seat. This will be repeated for grades 1-3 until the open seat is filled. If the wait list has been exhausted, the open-seat building principal will fill the spot at his/her discretion. Placements may be made in the 4th or 5th grade, upon administrative approval.

Extended Absences

Seats will be maintained for students who are absent for an extended period of time due to a medical or other school related issue. The same protocol used for general education students will be used for Montessori students. Students from other boundary areas who are seated will follow same absence guidelines as those attending on boundary exceptions.

Tuition

HPS Montessori is a public education offering; there is no tuition charge.

Transportation

A student is eligible for district-provided transportation if she/he attends a Montessori Elementary Program within his/her home boundary area. **Families outside their home boundary area attend on a boundary exception per parent choice are not eligible for transportation services.**

Progress Reports

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice yearly in each elementary school. Montessori classrooms participate in the same conference dates. Additional conferences may be arranged as the need arises.

Montessori classrooms use the same reporting tool used at all elementary levels.

Students in Montessori classrooms will participate in all district assessment and standardized testing.



Montessori Program Staff & Locations 2022-2023

Broadwater School

900 Hollins Avenue

Helena, MT 59601

(406) 324-1130

- Kellie Boedecker Principal
- Robyn Smith Lower Elementary
- Rebekah Harris Lower Elementary
- Jodi Delaney Upper Elementary

Central School

402 North Warren

Helena, MT 59601

(406) 324-1230

- Nick Radley Principal, District Montessori Coordinator
- Amy Casne-Fetz Lower Elementary
- Libby Kenney Lower Elementary
- Tony Napoletano Upper Elementary

Smith School

2320 5th Avenue

Helena, MT 59601

(406) 324-1530

- Sarah Simpson Principal
- Katy Wright Lower Elementary
- Shannon Callahan Lower Elementary
- Debra Beaver Upper Elementary

Helena Public Montessori Parents

HPMP

HPMP is a non-profit parent group that is devoted to Montessori education and support of the teachers and students. HPMP supports Montessori education in many ways, by volunteering in the classroom and working to raise funds for teacher training, continued professional development and classroom materials.

Meetings are held on the first Monday of every school month at 5:30 p.m. Parents are encouraged to attend these meetings but attendance is not required.

HPMP's mission is to encourage and support Montessori education in the Helena Public Schools through the funding of classroom materials; to promote the understanding of Montessori methods; and to provide resources to satisfy the needs of the community for Montessori education.

Helena Public Montessori Parents, Inc. (HPMP) www.helenamontessori.org
PO Box 731, Helena, MT 59624

2021-2022 HPMP Officers:

Co-President and Treasurer, Lizzie Maxner
Co-President, Pebbles Opp)
Secretary, Megan Skolrud
Smith Rep, Joslyn Hunt
Broadwater Rep, Alan Zackheim
Central Rep, Sonja and Pete Nowakowski
Tiffany Lyden, past co-president
Piper Lynch, past co-president

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Maria Montessori

1870-1952



Maria Montessori, known throughout the world as the originator of the Montessori Method of education, was the first woman in Italy to receive a medical degree.

In 1902, while working with disabled children, she was inspired to design a variety of learning materials. These proved to be highly effective and successful.

Five years later, Maria was asked to direct a pre-school project for socially disadvantaged children in the San Lorenzo district of Rome. Her *Casa del Bambini* (Children's House) became world famous, drawing educational observers from many different countries to watch the young children absorbed in learning with unique materials.

Eventually, Montessori gave up her medical practice and devoted her life to training teachers. Her philosophy and materials were based on the belief that education is not something which the teacher does, but a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. Although her materials and her educational theories for using them spread to six continents, her methods did not penetrate the mainstream of education.

However, Montessori's ideas have survived and flourished. Because they are based on her ingenious and exhaustive observations of children, they are timeless and universal.

The ideas incorporated in the Montessori Method are now being validated by modern research into how children learn. Educationalists have rediscovered their effectiveness and are using them as the basis for strategies such as cooperative learning, whole language and peer tutoring.

The Montessori Method



The Montessori Method is a child-centered approach to education that allows each child to follow an individualized learning program at their own pace.

The classroom environment is carefully prepared to facilitate self-directed learning. The teacher or director observes the child and acts as a guide. Lessons are presented individually or to small groups as needed.

This approach enables each child to develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically at their own unique pace. The child learns to take responsibility for his/her own actions and studies.

Montessori materials are provided to awaken the child's interest, which is then fostered by the teacher. Children are introduced to new concepts through specially designed, hands-on materials they can manipulate. Thus, they learn through their own experience and discovery.

Beginning from preschool, Montessori classrooms are organized in three-year age groupings. This enables students to work at their own speed and ability level in all subjects, and encourages older students to help younger, and vice versa.

The prepared Montessori environment stimulates the child's natural love of learning and innate curiosity. It provides children the opportunity to develop learning skills and a lifelong love of learning.



Instructional Style and Methods

Implementation of Montessori curriculum a trained teacher. Montessori methods are reflected in the style of the Montessori-trained teacher who prepares the environment to encourage individualization, freedom of choice, concentration, independence, problem solving, peer interactions and collaborations, and experiential learning. The Montessori Method encourages large uninterrupted blocks of time to allow the children to work.

Characteristics of Elementary Montessori Classes

- Children of mixed ages are grouped together in a Montessori classroom. Montessori classrooms in School District #1 are organized into two levels:

Lower Elementary	Ages 6 to 9, or grades 1, 2, and 3
Upper Elementary	Ages 9 to 12, or grades 4 and 5
- At the lower elementary level, children spend three years with the same teacher; at this level approximately one third of the class moves on to the next level each year.
- Materials are designed for use by individual students or small groups.
- With blocks of uninterrupted work time, students engage in individual and small group work of their choice. These choices are guided by the teacher and students receive instruction individually or in groups.
- Montessori classrooms promote an attitude of cooperation rather than competition. It is common for students to ask other students for help.
- The development of individual responsibility is emphasized. Children maintain the classroom and materials, and participate in developing the climate of their learning environment.

Classroom Organizational Patterns

The organization of a Montessori classroom requires flexibility. Flexible seating and creative use of space allow children option for work. A full range of Montessori materials is necessary for the elementary class, plus whatever additional materials are needed depending upon the levels of the students.

The Montessori environment should be arranged so that the greatest possible independence may be enjoyed by the child. Rather than directing the child's development, the teacher must know the level of achievement and the interests of each child and must thoroughly know the entire curriculum and state aligned standards. With this knowledge, the teacher is able to match materials to the child when the child needs help in making the match.

Description of Montessori Methodology in Helena Public Schools

The Montessori methodology has been found to be compatible with **HSD** curriculums for all applicable grades and subjects. It is in compliance with Montana Curriculum standards.

Program goals are specific to the curriculum as they are presented to the Montessori-trained teachers by American Montessori Society (AMS), American Montessori Institute (AMI), and Pan American Montessori (PanAM) training centers. These goals are reflected in the numerous materials prepared by teachers with parental assistance.

