

# Is Montessori For You?

Underlying the Montessori curriculum is a fundamental belief that each child has an instinctive and spontaneous desire to learn and that self-motivation is the only true impulse to learning. In the Montessori classroom, individual responsibility for behavior, along with respect for people and property accompanies the freedom that students enjoy. In collaboration with observant teachers who assist with goal-setting and assure steady achievement, children move themselves toward learning: They learn at their own pace and pursue materials and topics that are of interest to them.

To be successful, entering students must be able to learn to make choices, cooperate with peers, develop and maintain a sense of order, demonstrate self-discipline, function independently, and participate non-competitively in a classroom community. They must also find intrinsic satisfaction in work well done instead of seeking extrinsic rewards or pats on the back. Students whose learning style is primarily auditory, visual, or kinesthetic will find many stimulating and appropriate activities at Ridgeline. Students who are highly distractible may find our environment too stimulating for their learning needs.

## Montessori Philosophy

Ridgeline Montessori's educational program is based on the philosophy and methods developed 100 years ago by Dr. Maria Montessori. The basic principles of these theories are as follows:

- Every child begins life with an inner drive to explore and discover the world around her. This innate curiosity will lead to productive learning if given the proper environment, resources, and guidance.
- Academic, social, and emotional development are interdependent; education must center on the development of the whole child.
- Learning is most productive when self directed and founded on individual interest.
- In younger children, learning is most effective when it takes place through direct sensory experiences and interaction with objects in their natural context.
- Cognitive development follows a predictable progression from the concrete to the abstract. There are specific moments when each child is most ready to develop and acquire certain skills. Educators must understand these levels and introduce material at appropriate times.
- Information should be presented in a pattern of whole-to-part, and integrated through interdisciplinary study, so students can place it in context and understand how things are related.
- Learning can be enhanced and applied, especially in later years, by going out into the community.

Implemented together as a comprehensive methodology, these principles form a foundation for motivated learning and high achievement, thus meeting our mission to produce graduates who reach their full academic potential and are self-reliant, productive citizens.

Pedagogy and learning materials are the most compelling difference between Ridgeline Montessori and other schools. Although the basic academic content of the curriculum is the same, the following elements are key to a Montessori classroom: distinctive Montessori materials, the prepared environment, teacher's role, individual learning contracts, long, uninterrupted work periods, interdisciplinary approach, multi-age classrooms and enhanced curriculum.

## The Montessori Materials

Carefully designed materials are at the heart of a Montessori classroom. Each material embodies a particular concept or skill but addresses many levels of understanding, beginning with the concrete and moving to the abstract. Many materials are self-correcting and provide students with feedback, thus reinforcing autonomy, confidence, and self-motivation. Used in the non-competitive classroom, the materials allow each child to develop at his or her own rate. Extensive written materials and available computers support the Montessori emphasis on research using both primary and secondary sources of

information. Concepts are introduced with a "key experience" lesson from the teacher. Learning is reinforced as students work with sequenced materials and record or expand upon their activities in written form.

### **The Prepared Environment**

Dr. Montessori created what she called the "prepared environment," designed to encourage self directed learning. The classroom is arranged in learning areas, with clusters of student sized tables and open areas for floor work. Shelves of materials pertaining to a particular area of study surround each learning area. The materials are arranged systematically and in developmental sequence. Students are free to move about the classroom choosing resources and working individually or in small groups as they pursue their work plan.

### **Teachers and Their Roles**

At Ridgeline Montessori, each classroom of 28-30 students has both a teacher and a trained assistant. Montessori teachers are rarely the center of attention in the classroom. Instead, the teacher is one source of information among many and the focus during work times is on each student working at his or her challenge level. The teachers prepare the environment, observe the children carefully to determine skill levels and readiness, offer appropriate activities, and facilitate the process of "learning how to learn." Montessori teachers also actively model appropriate, respectful behavior and positive conflict resolution. Class meetings are held weekly and decision-making follows a consensus model.

### **Enhanced Curriculum**

Using the services of a Montessori consulting firm, we have correlated the Montessori Scope and Sequence with the Oregon Curriculum Goals to ensure full coverage of both curricula. The Montessori elementary curriculum strongly emphasizes math and language, then uses them to study other subjects including anthropology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, economics, geography, geology, government, history, philosophy, physics, political science, and sociology. Art, music, and Spanish are part of the integrated Montessori prepared environment as well as being subjects that are taught in their own right. Physical education is provided twice weekly. Technology is a tool that supports all other curriculum areas.

### **Long Uninterrupted Work Periods**

Whole-class instruction time is minimal; the school day is structured to allow students to spend long blocks of time on work that they choose within the framework of their contract. This schedule enables students to explore a topic or material thoroughly and to carry it through to completion.

### **Interdisciplinary Approach**

Subjects are not taught in isolation; they are related thematically to each other. Students are taught to use reading, writing, and math as tools for the pursuit of knowledge and skills. This approach motivates students to master the basic skills and use them in understanding material in the content areas.

### **Multi-age Classrooms**

Students are grouped in multi-age clusters spanning two to three years in the elementary program. Multi-age classrooms serve to: maximize curriculum options available to students; encourage cooperation and minimize competition; provide opportunities for indirect learning for younger students; foster self-confidence in students who serve as role models; and provide for long-term teacher/student relationships.

### **Individual Learning Contracts**

Elementary students work according to individual learning contracts (ILCs) that they develop with their teachers and update periodically to reflect progress and standardized test results. These contracts set forth how the student will complete the curriculum requirements. Students and teachers track work weekly to ensure they are fulfilling their ILC. Individual students progress at their own rates and level of learning.

# Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School

## Student Enrollment Application

2010-11

Lottery Applications Due: **Thursday, March 18, 2010**

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Information Session Attended \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Entering \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: M F

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Current School \_\_\_\_\_

Is there another student in your family who would like to apply at this time? YES\* NO

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Current School \_\_\_\_\_

\* A separate enrollment form must be completed for this student.

Parent/Guardian #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Pager \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Pager \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Has your child had experience in a Montessori classroom before? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, at what age(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you hear about Ridgeline? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your child's learning style. Please consider his/her motivation, ability to follow classroom rules, interest in working independently or collaboratively, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any special concerns for your child that you feel we should be aware of? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the student currently on an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?  Yes  No If yes, why is the special education team supportive of your student attending Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you feel that Ridgeline Montessori is the right placement for your student with special needs? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please read the attached article before answering the following questions.**

Why do you feel that a Montessori education/environment is right for your child? \_\_\_\_\_

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What role do you see yourself playing in your child's education at home and at school? \_\_\_\_\_

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At home, how do you encourage your child's growing independence? \_\_\_\_\_

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What limits/expectations in child guidance are particularly important to your family? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some of your family's favorite activities (individually and together as a family)? \_\_\_\_\_

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How would you communicate your concerns if you have a problem with the school? \_\_\_\_\_

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3rd grade students and above (please *handwrite*): Tell us about one of your best learning experiences (in school or out!).

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In conclusion, please share what one quality, experience, or learning that you hope your child will embrace during his or her time at Ridgeline Montessori? \_\_\_\_\_

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***I certify that the information provided above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature