

# Why Montessori? Your Child's Elementary Years

## What Makes Our Program So Special?

- **Individualized Learning:** Children are guided through the curriculum at their own pace. They are never bored or overwhelmed and are often able to advance beyond their peers in traditional schools.

- **Family-Like Community:** Small student to teacher ratios plus multiple, trained adults in each room create a positive, peaceful, and nurturing classroom environment for small, diverse group instruction.

- **Diverse Classrooms:** Multi-age learning allows peer-teaching and mentorship. Students stay in the same classroom with the same teacher for a three-year cycle which fosters a deeper bond and aids in the continuous progression of learning.

- **Hands-On Learning:** Students explore with hands-on materials (instead of textbooks and worksheets), learn how to research what interests them, and create reports and presentations to help teach others.

- **Field Trips:** Students participate in class field trips to camp, concerts, plays, and outdoor learning opportunities. Additionally, students plan their own "Going Out" trips to explore individual topics of interest and foster community engagement.

- **Phenomenal After-School Program:** In our outdoor learning environment known as "The Hill," students have the opportunity for supervised free play. They explore a variety of activities, including: the study of plants and animals, art, literature and writing, and various outdoor games.

- **Private Music Lessons:** Students can participate in private piano lessons and the Recorder Ensemble.

- **Character Education:** Children are exposed to lessons in character building, problem solving, and etiquette through role-playing, which helps them discover their place in their community and the world.

- **Preparation for Middle School and Beyond:** Students learn time management, selfmotivation, and executive functioning skills. Our goal is to create kind, inclusive, responsible, and sensitive members of society who will be successful in any future environment.

4TH YEAR

5TH YEAR

6TH YEAR

Community Building Day, Annie's Big Nature Lesson at the Kalamazoo Nature Center, Overnight Camping Trip,

Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Kalamazoo Valley Museum, 2+ Going Out Experiences

Independently plan and fundraise for a 1-day class trip

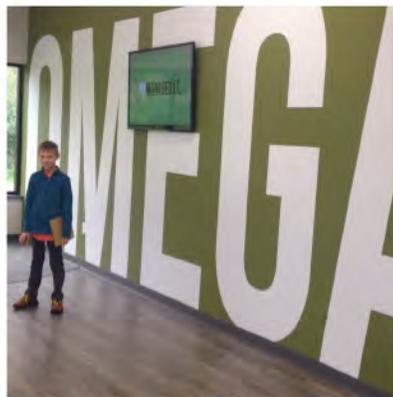
Fundraise, budget & plan 3-5-day trip

Community Leader Interview

Internships with local businesses

# Why 6th Grade at The Montessori School?

- The Montessori classroom is designed for a three year cycle. Just as children complete a three year cycle in the Primary and Lower Elementary Rooms, three years in Upper Elementary will allow children to continue this stage of development in one safe environment.
- Children will be better prepared emotionally, socially, and academically for the middle school experience.
- The ultimate opportunity for independence is presented during the culminating year in Montessori: The Sixth Year Internship.



## 6th Year Internship

Students benefit from three different internships in the areas of:

- Plants • Animals
- People (elderly, sick, impoverished, mentally ill, young)
- Social Programs • Manufacturing
- Science • Technology • Education
- Business • Farming • Culinary Arts
- Internal TMS Opportunities

*Each internship lasts approximately three months:*

*September-November, January-March, and April-June.*

*Students attend their internship once per week.*

## 4TH YEAR

World literature and history, scientific method, mathematical operations, foundations of geometry, laws and principles of engineering, parts of speech, writing and editing, art design

## 5TH YEAR

Great U.S. authors, U.S. history, scientific experiments and data collection, algebra, theorems, engineering design process, complex sentence analysis, art history and techniques

## 6TH YEAR

Early Civilizations, up to high school level literature, data collection, math concepts through trigonometry, proofs, engineering in the community and world, art portfolio and artist study

# The Montessori School Elementary Curriculum

Our inter-connected curriculum is unique to the Montessori philosophy of teaching. Students are guided through the curriculum at their own pace, not just based on what a grade level dictates. We cater to the whole child rather than just core academics. The range of topics is limitless and the curriculum is immense.

- **Math:** Topics such as hierarchy of numbers, operations, fractions, math facts, time, money, measurement, geometry, word problems, and algebra are explored.

- **Language Arts:** Students learn the history of language, grammar, mechanics of language, word study, cursive writing, and spelling patterns. There is a great emphasis on becoming a confident writer.

- **Reading:** Students learn in small groups and individually, rather than by grade level or as a class, and they are able to explore a variety of genres while gaining the skills needed to be life-long readers.

- **Science and Social Studies:** Students in Lower Elementary are introduced to the areas of astronomy, meteorology, chemistry, physics, geology, geography, biology, botany, ancient life, history, cultural studies, and more! Students in Upper Elementary build on these lessons with more focused research projects. A STEM curriculum offers cool projects like building a 3D printer.

- **Environmental Education:** Placed-based action projects serve as curricular extensions that raise ecological awareness and encourage exploration of the natural environment, both on campus and in the larger community.

- **Art:** Students are able to choose to do art on a daily basis with lessons in drawing, painting, sculpture, art history, and more! Various mediums and tools are available for use on art projects or to extend other academic areas.

- **Music:** Students build skills in recorder, xylophone, body percussion, and hand percussion instruments. Students learn about composers, their periods and styles, and families of instruments. They showcase their skills in two concerts each year.

- **Health and Wellness:** This curriculum addresses a student's physical, mental, and emotional health as they explore different seasonal activities. Yoga and mindfulness, tennis instruction at the YMCA, anatomy and physiology, and nutrition round out our wellness curriculum which helps students care for their own health over a lifetime.

- **Peace Education:** Students meet regularly to discuss empathy, self-expression, conflict resolution, and learn strategies to understand their own feelings and needs. These skills, which encourage emotional intelligence, are practiced daily.

## Daily Elementary Schedule

- 8:00-8:15 AM: Arrival
- 8:15-11:30 AM: Uninterrupted work cycle with small group lessons, individualized help, conferences with individual students.
- 10:00 AM-12:00 PM: Self-select lunch
- 1:00-3:00 PM: Afternoon includes Reading Groups, Health and Wellness, and Music
- 3:00-3:10 PM: Dismissal

*\*Before and after care is available starting at 7:30 AM and Ending at 6:00 PM*

# Meet Our Elementary Staff



## **Anne Wester | Lower Elementary Lead Guide**

Anne Wester joined The Montessori School as a Lower Elementary Lead Guide in 2016. A Kalamazoo native, Anne graduated from Western Michigan University with a Bachelor's in Elementary Education. She earned her Master's in Education from St. Catherine University. She has an Elementary I and II certificate from the American Montessori Society. Anne taught at Northglade Montessori Magnet School from 1999-2010 before staying home with her daughter, Jane, a TMS alumna.



## **Jocelyn Clark | Upper Elementary Lead Guide**

Jocelyn Clark has a Bachelor of Liberal Arts with a concentration in Sociology from Kalamazoo College. She started at the Montessori School in 1991 in a childcare position while working on a Master's in Criminology at Western Michigan University. She loved her work here so much she changed directions educationally and earned a Michigan Teaching Certificate after reentering Kalamazoo College. She attended the Washington Montessori Institute to earn her AMI Montessori Certification, and Loyola University in Baltimore for her Master's in Education.



## **Jessica Hagen | Elementary Coordinator, Health & Wellness Specialist**

Jessica has an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education and a bachelor's degree in Child and Family Development from Western Michigan University. Jessica is also pursuing her certification in outdoor and environmental education through the Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education. She is passionate about place-based learning, outdoor education, hiking, biking, and photography. Jessica has been at The Montessori School since 2016.



## **Sierra O'Connell-Koon | Art Specialist**

Sierra received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography and a Minor in Graphic Design through Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids. She is very passionate about the outdoors, growing up hiking, camping, swimming and countless hours of volunteer work with the West Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club. Sierra and her husband have a very large garden and can be spotted at the Richland Farmers Market quite often. Canning, pickling, wine-making, camping, foraging, and kayaking are some of her favorite hobbies.



## **Hal Hobson | Music Specialist**

Originally from Lansing, Hal Hobson graduated from Western Michigan University in 2000 with a Bachelor's in Musical Theatre Performance. He joined The Montessori School staff as music specialist in 2001. He has completed levels one through three certifications in Orff-Schulwerk and has been a session presenter at local and regional Orff conferences. Hal is very involved in Kalamazoo's vibrant music scene, including directing community choirs, playing piano and recorder in ensembles, and teaching piano and voice. He composes original transition music for All Ears Theatre, a local radio drama troupe, and participates in theatre productions as an actor, director and music director, at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, Farmer's Alley Theatre, and other local stages.



## **Anne Root | Reading Specialist**

Anne Root received her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Michigan-Flint. She trained at SLD Read, and has been a tutor with this organization since 1999. Her first tutoring experiences brought her to The Montessori School where she found the Montessori Method intriguing. In 2013 she completed a 90 hour faith-based Montessori course for primary students. Anne loves to tent camp, sew, and read.



## **Karen Bildner | Elementary Assistant**

Karen is from Port Huron, MI, and earned her bachelor's degree in Special Education at WMU in 2000. She also holds a Masters Degree in Elementary Education, with a Literacy Emphasis from Walden University. Karen worked in Niles Community Schools and at Northeastern Elementary in Kalamazoo as a Special Education teacher for 7 years before taking some "time off" to spend with her children. Karen has worked as a reading tutor at SLD Read for the past 12 years and has extensive Orton-Gillingham training. She finds great joy in watching her students learn and grow in understanding! Karen lives in Kalamazoo with her husband Josiah, children Caleb and Johannah, and their 2 dogs. Karen's hobbies include photography, baking, sewing, drawing and painting.



## **Siena Beattie | Maple Room Assistant**

Siena received a B.A. in Theatre Education and English from Sarah Lawrence College. After graduating she spent a year in Madrid, Spain as an English Language assistant in a public elementary school. She moved to Kalamazoo in November 2019 and began working at The Montessori School shortly after. Siena was a Montessori preschooler herself and is eager to pursue a Montessori teacher certification down the road. Siena loves to travel the world, bake, and has a love of languages including Spanish, and has begun learning ASL.

# Our Elementary Space



**The Classroom**

The elementary campus provides a warm, vibrant, educational home designed to foster a love of learning and help all children reach their fullest potential at their own unique pace. The space houses carefully designed materials and activities that facilitate our goal to educate the whole child and to inspire children to be caring, socially responsible participants in their community: in the classroom, at home and in the world. Our thoughtfully prepared classroom allows students to move comfortably and independently through the space as they work. Multi-age classrooms allow the children to learn from one another and to be valued contributors to the classroom community.



**Outdoor Classroom**

The educational environment need not be confined to the traditional classroom space. At The Montessori School we practice place-based learning and believe that nature and our community is the most dynamic classroom. With this in mind, students in our elementary program are free to move between our indoor and outdoor classroom throughout their work-cycle. Projects in the outdoor classroom include a meteorology station, larger scale engineering projects and horticulture. This space is also dedicated to gross motor works such as jump roping and yoga. Students may self-select a more physically engaged work in the outdoor space without disrupting their peers doing quiet, seated work indoors.



**“The Hill” Outdoor Learning Area**

Our elementary staff has put much care into cultivating an outdoor space that facilitates exploration. Our students enjoy planning and maintaining several garden beds. Currently we have a native wetland garden, two wildflower gardens — all of which are certified Monarch Waystations — and are in the process of planning a fourth butterfly garden. Elementary students also oversee our composting program, using both tumbler and in-ground composting methods. We are registered as part of the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge, our schoolyard is a Certified Wildlife Habitat, and we are Eco-School Certified. We’ve also applied to be certified as a Green School.