

# DMS Blueprint

## Our Mission

The mission of the Damariscotta Montessori School is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating Montessori environment which will help children develop within themselves the foundation for a lifetime of learning, thinking and living. We are a child centered community that honors individuality and encourages respect for one another and oneself. We believe that the deep commitment and dedication of our small community, which is made up of our school's children, parents and staff members, is vital in the fulfillment of this mission.

## Our program rests on these core values:

1. **Respect** – Self-respect, respect for others, tolerance, honesty, integrity and responsibility.
2. **Compassion** – Concern for one another, for humanity, kindness, peacefulness, understanding, acceptance, inclusion, and warmth.
3. **Belonging** – Acceptance and understanding of one another, and tolerance and curiosity of our differences.

**Significance** – Social interest, a sense that “I matter, I am part of this community, and I am capable of making meaningful contributions.”

4. **Love of Learning** – Discovery, exploration, working together, curiosity, and ownership.
5. **Service** – A lifelong commitment to give something back through service to others who are in need.
6. **Independence** – Doing for oneself, understanding one's own capabilities.
7. **Interdependence** – Responsibility to and healthy dependence upon one another, a love of community.
8. **Excellence** – Quality in all we do to serve the children, and the cultivation of the pursuit of excellence within our students.
9. **Universal Understanding** – A global perspective, and an understanding of being part of something bigger than oneself.

# Fundamental Nature of our School

## A. The Fundamental Nature of our School

1. The Montessori approach to learning is the educational framework of our educational program.
2. DMS is an AMS (American Montessori Society) Accredited School
3. DMS is a child-centered school.
4. DMS is a family-friendly school.
5. We are committed to developing and fostering character and values within our children.
6. We are committed to embracing the universal nature of humankind, honoring the differences among us, and fostering respect for one another.
7. DMS is an inclusive, close-knit community of students, educators, parents, and friends of the school, respectful of our differences and similarities.

### A. The Montessori approach to learning is the educational framework of our educational program.

1. **We are a *Montessori* School.** We maintain the integrity of the Montessori philosophy by following the guidelines set by the American Montessori Society for accredited schools, and by maintaining our status as an accredited school.
2. **The nature of the child and the learning process:**
  - a. We believe the children can be most successful in a prepared environment where they are free to respond to their natural tendency to work; that the children's innate love of learning is encouraged by giving them opportunities to engage in spontaneous, meaningful activities under the guidance of a trained adult; that through their work, children develop concentration and joyful self-discipline; and that within a framework of order, the children progress at their own pace and rhythm, according to their individual capabilities.
  - b. We believe that education succeeds when it draws its principles and practices from the natural development of the child.
  - c. We believe that education is an aid to life, and that the goal of a Montessori education is to help children with the task of their inner construction as they grow from childhood to maturity.
  - d. We believe that education begins at birth and continues throughout life. Our primary purpose is to educate the children entrusted to our care in accordance with Montessori principles. As well, we seek to be a center of support for all who wish to continue learning and developing toward becoming whole and healthy individuals.
  - e. We believe that the children have the intelligence and natural ability required to learn everything they need to lead full, happy, and productive lives.
  - f. We believe that true wisdom is the ability to clearly see and understand ourselves, the world around us, and our place within the world. In order to achieve this goal we believe that respect, self-worth, human dignity, emotional well being, and the ability to communicate and cooperate effectively with others, must be valued at least as highly as academic and material success.
  - g. We believe that wisdom can be cultivated.
3. **We respect the individual needs of the child:**
  - a. We approach learning by seeking to understand each child's uniqueness.
  - b. We guide children individually and at their own pace, through the range of learning skills, so they fully realize their potential.

- c. We celebrate the natural diversity of human beings, be it in learning style, interests, cultural background, ethnicity, or definition of what makes a happy and successful life.
4. **We cultivate the love of learning:** Our goal is to produce adults who have not only learned how to learn, but also have an innate love of learning, a wide range of interests, and an openness to new ideas and possibilities.
5. **We nurture a positive sense of self:** We believe that an honest and positive view of oneself is critical to realizing each person's potential. We strive to base every interaction between community members on this principle. It is the very fabric of our community and our educational methods.
6. **We encourage students to not be afraid of failure:** We consciously encourage our students to learn from their experience and to self-evaluate. We view mistakes as an opportunity to learn!
7. **We educate the whole child:** We believe that the development of a whole, healthful being requires the nurturing of our many dimensions, including the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional.
  - a. **Intellectual:** The intellect is an important tool in the shaping of our world. Through the development of our thinking abilities, we refine our emotional responses, we clarify our picture of the universe, and we develop the discipline to maintain vibrant health.
  - b. **Emotional:** Our emotions are complex and powerful, and it is imperative that we learn to feel them fully and without fear, identify them correctly (in ourselves and others), respect them, and accept them. It is equally important, however, that we learn to harness their power and not let them control our lives unchecked.
  - c. **Physical:** We seek to help our students discover, understand, and adopt the lifestyle habits most appropriate and beneficial for their bodies and minds. Among these are fresh air, pure water, exercise, sunlight, and proper diet.
  - d. **Spiritual:** We feel it is each person's task to develop his or her own understanding of the nature of the universe and the individual's place in it. We proceed on the premise that our world is a beautiful, positive, loving place, a setting that provides the potential for each person to lead a full, free, joyful, and healthy life. While we do not teach religion, nor advocate any particular belief system, we encourage students to explore questions raised by the world's religions and develop the spiritual side of their lives.
8. **Developmental approach to education:** Our educational approach is centered on the stages of human development.
  - a. **Developmental stages:** Our faculty is actively involved in a continuous study of human development. This study includes keeping abreast of current theories on development, regular student observation, and a constant evaluation of the curriculum to ensure that it is appropriate for the developmental stages of our students.
    1. **First six years of life are critical:** We recognize that the first six years are critical to the development of one's life.
    2. **We maintain multi-age classrooms:** Our classrooms are divided by age according to Montessori developmental philosophy, respecting the "sensitive

periods” of children at different developmental stages. Our classrooms are structured in the following manner: ages 3-6, 6-9, and 9-12 (or 6-12).

- b. **Individualization:** We strive for individualized pacing and adaptation of the classroom program (when possible) to meet varied styles of learning.
  - c. **Flexibility:** Our educational program is designed for flexibility in its curriculum and use of resources.
  - d. **Academic expectations in an individualized approach:** In designing this individualized program we follow an established curricular framework that includes the school's expectations for basic academic achievement at each level of the school, leading toward graduation and guidance toward appropriate educational placement for each child after Montessori.
9. **Active learning:** We promote active rather than passive learning by:
- a. encouraging spontaneous activity in education by encouraging students to pursue studies in all areas of their personal interests;
  - b. using hands-on, "experiential" learning, whenever possible, through the use of concrete manipulative learning materials, experimental discovery, seminar discussions, independent library research, field investigation, or computer simulations; and
  - c. guiding the student to a sense of accomplishment, closure and recognition of having reached a pre-established goal for learning.
10. **The passage to abstraction:** To facilitate this process, we consistently work from a very concrete level of experience to the abstract. To aid students in learning, we begin by giving them the "big picture", and work from this toward an increasing level of detail. This concept has created a spiraling curriculum in which skills and concepts are presented and reintroduced at increasing levels of complexity and abstraction over the years.
11. **External structure:** As necessary we provide community members with sufficient external structure and support in a committed effort to ensure that their developmental needs are met. We do this in a manner that reflects our expectations and philosophy.
- a. We interpret the general principle of Montessori education, "follow the child", to refer to the importance of allowing people to pursue areas of spontaneous interest whenever possible.
  - b. If a child needs more direction at certain times or is not internally motivated in a given area, we feel it is our responsibility to acknowledge the personal preference but to still require that the necessary work be completed.
12. **Freedom within order:** We strive for a balance between freedom, order and responsibility.
13. **Diverse learning styles:** We seek to provide an open environment to share our values in a truly diverse community.
14. **Our primary focus:** Our primary focus will always be the well-being and best interests of our students.

**15. We nurture curiosity, creativity, and imagination:**

- a. As educators we consciously work to encourage people to think creatively in their writing, problem solving and research.
- b. Our program places great emphasis on the Fine Arts, both in the classroom environment and through the contributions of our specialists in the visual and performing arts.
- c. As is appropriate for each age group, we encourage students to become aware of the major social, political, economic, environmental and ethical issues of our day, and, having carefully considered all sides, to take a responsible stand for themselves and to explore ways of making a positive personal contribution to society.
- d. We are constantly modeling and encouraging respect and communication between all members of our community. We would like all community members to be versed in skills of active listening, negotiation, respect for one another, empathy for another person's position, and the ability to stand up for oneself and say no without guilt if someone is encroaching on their rights.

**16. Global perspective:** We embrace a global perspective for building a diverse community grounded in knowledge that leads to understanding and acceptance of all peoples. We seek to develop a global perspective and international understanding through our curriculum at every age level:

- a. through the study of physical, cultural, and economic geography
- b. through encouraging families to share their cultural traditions, travel experiences and traditional festivals
- c. by utilizing our international families as a tremendous teaching resource

**17. Universality and diversity:** We recognize that contemporary society must honor diverse beliefs to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by an ever-changing world. We respect the universality and diversity of humankind in our community and acknowledge the unique contributions of all individuals, who enrich and inspire our personal growth.

**B. DMS prepares students for higher education**

1. **Fulfilling potential:** We want our students to be well trained in the basic academic disciplines, to fulfill their creative potential, and to gain satisfaction in their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.
2. **Academic standards:** In all cases we set our expectations high, not asking individuals to do more than that of which they are capable, but consistently stressing at all levels the importance of careful work and pride in accomplishment. The reward is not in a quantity of work achieved but the satisfaction of work done well for its own sake. We carefully build a supportive environment for the unhurried mind to move steadily toward the pursuit of excellence.

3. **Creative thinking and problem-solving skills:** The ability to think critically and solve problems creatively is a cornerstone of Montessori educational philosophy. We believe that in all areas of the curriculum that children learn best through their own discovery in a carefully planned environment with self-correcting materials that allow children to learn through their experiences.
4. **Practical life skills:** To facilitate and encourage a sense of independence, we deliberately teach a wide range of practical life skills appropriate to each child's level of development. We regard this as a vital element affecting the design of our entire curriculum.
5. **Competition:** We believe that it is neither necessary nor appropriate to inspire unrestrained academic pressure and scholastic competition among students. We cultivate the ability to accept success with grace, and failure or loss with dignity, and resolve to build on the experience. We ensure the right to choose whether or not to participate in competitive activities, and we stress the principles of good sportsmanship.
6. **Success:** We design our educational program to maximize each person's academic and personal success. We strive to encourage people to build on their strengths and personal learning styles and learn from their mistakes.
  - a. **Academic success:** We encourage skills that support independent and successful learning, critical thinking, cooperative projects, reflective reading, problem solving, library research, use of technology, techniques for effective study, test-taking strategies, and techniques for focusing attention.
  - b. **Personal success:** We consider it equally important that our community members be successful human beings who can establish healthy relationships and achieve happiness in their personal lives. We teach our students to pay attention to and respect feelings, both their own and those of others. We help them to learn to solve conflicts effectively and fairly, and to express their feelings in a healthy manner. Group dynamics and communication skills are also stressed
7. **Primary curriculum:** We offer a well-rounded, developmentally based, and academically challenging primary curriculum:
  - a. **Practical Life:** Our students develop task and cognitive organization and cognitive organization through the exploration of everyday life skills in the Practical Life area of the primary classroom. Children develop concentration independence, self-confidence, coordination of gross and fine motor skills, and a sense of order through carefully prepared exercises in food preparation, physical skills, grace and courtesy, care of their environment and care of themselves. Practical Life is really practicing the skills of life!
  - b. **Sensorial:** We facilitate the children's ability to order, classify and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, and color through the careful preparation of the sensorial materials in each primary classroom.
  - c. **Mathematics:** We use specially designed Montessori materials to help children internalize the concepts of quantity, symbol, sequence, and operations as well as memorization of basic facts.
  - d. **Language Arts:** We introduce and facilitate the development of oral language, written expression, reading, the study of grammar and creative dramatics. Throughout the

curriculum the children are exposed to a wide variety of children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters, alphabet cut-outs, and various presentations allowing children to link sounds and letter symbols effortlessly and to express their thoughts through writing.

- e. **Cultural:** Cultural studies expose children to fundamentals of geography, world cultures, life sciences, art and music. Hands-on materials are used to help children integrate concepts that are traditionally taught at a much older age. Cultural studies are integrated throughout the curriculum.
  - f. **Peace Education:** Peaceful interactions, conflict resolution skills, and communication skills are all important elements in nurturing our students. Peace Education is a foundational element in our primary classrooms.
8. **Elementary and Middle School Curriculum:** We offer a well-rounded, developmentally based, and academically challenging elementary curriculum:
- a. **Science:** We teach students not only scientific facts, but the process, history, and true nature of science. We foster and encourage true engagement with and understanding of the scientific method. We want our students to understand that science is not the subjects that scientists study, but the process of studying the world; its end product being simply reliable information. Students will study science every year. Our curriculum will be consciously integrated, incorporating topics from botany, zoology, physical science, machines and technology, astronomy, geology, ecology, earth science, chemistry and the biology.
  - b. **Classical Language:** We seek to help students develop the beginnings of a global literacy by introducing them to languages from around the world. Starting in first grade, students formally study Latin, Latin studies provide students with strong foundation in grammar, logical analysis, English vocabulary, and a preparation for spoken foreign languages. Phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical features considered to be typical of Romance languages are anticipated in the study of Latin
  - c. **Mathematics:** We will help students grasp the underlying concepts of mathematics, beginning with the concrete and moving to the abstract, through the use of specially designed Montessori materials and through application of mathematics to real world tasks. Wherever possible, especially as the children make the passage to abstraction, we endeavor to weave mathematics into the curriculum, enabling students to discover mathematics as means of understanding the world around us.
  - d. **Geography:** We seek to develop a global perspective and international understanding, teaching world geography (physical, cultural, political, and economic) at every level of the school.
  - e. **History:** We develop a strong historical perspective through the study of prehistory and history, following an anthropological orientation into fundamental needs of humankind and the cultures, lifestyles and technology of the past. We cultivate an appreciation of family and community heritage. History sets the stage for integrated learning at every age level. We believe that our students should understand the patterns of architecture found around us, how houses are constructed and designed, and develop an appreciation for the timeless beauty of well-designed spaces. We strongly believe that our students should understand how government works at the local, state, and

federal levels, and the role that citizens can and should play in shaping consensus, advocating their point of view, and making informed decisions before they vote. They should also understand how the legal system works and have an informed working knowledge of and respect for the law. Our goal is to lead our students to stay informed about current issues and to play an active and responsible role as citizens of our nation. Our history studies focus not just on historical events and conflicts, but on developing deep curiosity about the diversity of cultures throughout the world and the universality of mankind.

- f. **Anthropology and Myth:** As part of our nature as an international school, we teach students the basic elements of anthropology, addressing the question of what makes us human, the nature of culture, and how cultures have attempted to explain or illuminate the great questions of life through story, myth, and cultural archetypes.
- g. **Language Arts and Literature:** Naturally, we are looking to develop students who read and write with fluency and enjoyment. We explore all forms of human communication. We recognize that we live in a time when the various languages of art, (visual, written, spoken and musical) particularly through various forms of electronic media, have a profound impact on our lives. We develop in each person the ability to understand and filter this influence. We also believe that by developing our ability to use these languages we strengthen our self-esteem and enhance our ability to express more effectively our thoughts and feelings.
- h. **Research Skills:** Rather than having students memorize facts mindlessly, we would rather teach them to learn mindfully and develop great skill in the process of doing investigations and research using the library, internet, public records, and primary and secondary source materials. Interviewing skills are also very important skills that we emphasize. We seek to have our students learn how to organize and integrate the information that they compile into increasingly sophisticated reports and presentations.
- i. **The Visual and Performing Arts:** Our program places great emphasis on the Fine Arts, both through the contributions of our Music and Art specialists and through classroom programs and experiences initiated by the teachers to foster art and music appreciation and creative drama.
- j. **Physical Education and Health:** We want our students to understand, appreciate, and adopt a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise, proper diet, intelligent choices regarding personal health, and stress reduction.
- k. **Peace Education:** Peaceful human relations, conflict resolution skills, diversity, nonviolence, inclusion, cultural awareness, leadership training, social interest, curiosity of different perspectives, cooperative teamwork skills, and communication skills are all important elements in nurturing our students. Peace Education will be as vital an element of our curriculum as mathematics and science.
- l. **Practical Life skills:** The elementary classroom provides opportunities for children to develop their sense of independence and sense of capability through a variety of practical life experiences. These practical life skills include the following:
  - a. **Eye-hand coordination** and the use of simple tools.

- b. **Grace and courtesy:** appropriate ways to handle situations kindly.
- c. **Practical economics:** the value and use of money, including how to earn and manage spending money.
- d. **Technology:** the safe use of technology, such as more complex tools, telephones, computers, classroom audio-visual equipment, and household appliances. We use the computer as a fundamental tool in the process of learning, as it helps students find, manage, represent and synthesize information.
- e. **Communication:** the appropriate use of the technology of personal and mass communication, from writing letters to using the telephone, using the word processor, preparing the newsletter, speaking before an audience and designing audiovisual presentations.
- f. **Care of One's Environment:** how to cook, clean set tables, do dishes, garden, minor household repairs, yard work, childcare, and laundry.
- g. **Health and Safety:** the development of sound habits of safety, nutrition, and hygiene, along with the acquisition of first-aid skills and as developmentally appropriate, CPR.

C. **DMS prepares students for life. Our goal is to inspire a passion for excellence and a lifelong love of learning.**

- 1. **DMS provides a broad preparation for life:** balancing academic excellence with the development of personal and practical life skills.
- 2. **DMS teaches universal values:**
  - a. **Respect and Dignity:** We respect the fundamental human needs, rights, and dignity of each person, no matter how young, as a full and independent person who is engaged in the ongoing process of development. During this process, while honoring the right to self-determination, we model and encourage certain values: kindness, honesty, warmth, openness, respect and curiosity for each person's uniqueness, tolerance, cooperation, good sportsmanship, and nonviolence.
  - b. **Compassion:** We encourage our children to be open-minded, kind and compassionate; to gain a sense of themselves and others, and to understand and appreciate and respect one another.
  - c. **Love of Learning:** We want students to love learning and to value knowledge, creativity, and humor. We cultivate a love of learning through hands on discovery, group work, independent exploration, nurturing curiosity, encouraging ownership in learning, and allowing children to work at their own pace.
  - d. **Service:** We believe that each of our children is gifted with different talents and abilities, and that the most noble and rewarding use of those gifts is to help and serve one another. We hope they will be responsible, critical, and caring members of a

diverse society and recognize that they have the power and resources to effect change as well as the self-esteem and confidence to pursue their goals.

- e. **Integrity:** Integrity is the foundation of character. We encourage our students to be honest with themselves and those around them.
- f. **Independence:** We make a concerted effort to empower people at our school, helping them to learn how to make responsible choices for themselves, to recognize that they are assuming increasing control over their lives as they mature, and to discover how to make a difference in the world around them by positive efforts and contributions to others.
- g. **Interdependence:** As a Montessori school we encourage and value independence - freedom within appropriate limits - which is always linked with responsibility. To facilitate the development of responsibility, accountability, independence and a sense of engagement with the community we strongly encourage participation in day-to-day classroom management, community decision making, and care of one's self and the school environment. We seek to help each community member to see the value of responsibility and commitment to themselves, the school community and to the community of man, and that the good of the individual and that of the community is interdependent.
- h. **Excellence** – We strive to instill a passion for excellence in our students in everything that they do, both in and outside of school, with the understanding that each person has unique abilities that contribute to the good of humanity.
- i. **Understanding and Tolerance:** As educators, parents and citizens of the world with the mutual goal of world peace we consider it our responsibility to model and encourage tolerance, self-awareness and understanding both to our children and to each other. We value and encourage curiosity as children learn about differences in ability, in heritage, in religion, in culture, in beliefs, in thought, in ways of doing things, in dress and in physical appearance.

#### **D. Discipline**

1. Our ultimate goal is to encourage self-discipline and self-motivation as the reasons for positive and constructive behavior rather than fear or motivation from without.
2. Ultimately, we wish for every community member to be willing to accept full responsibility for their behavior, their attitudes, their experiences, and in short for their lives. The enormous reward that comes with accepting this responsibility is the freedom to choose and create the type of person they wish to be, and the life they wish to lead.
3. In keeping with the true meaning of the word discipline, which is to teach, we prefer to teach, model and encourage appropriate, kind, and considerate ways to behave in various situations.
4. We believe that children do better when they feel better about themselves. We also believe that children feel better about themselves when they are capable and have a sense of their own capability. Therefore, we teach and foster life long problem solving and interpersonal skills.

5. We teach and model ways to negotiate social conflict so that whenever possible everyone can win and at the very least everyone feels heard and that her feelings and needs are respected.
6. School should be safe. We endeavor to provide a school environment that will promote and protect the physical and emotional well being of our students and staff.
7. We use positive reinforcement whenever possible to encourage progress and acknowledge contributions.
8. We will never permit the use of corporal punishment.
9. When behavior is inappropriate and a gentle reminder isn't enough, we intervene and respectfully but firmly stop the behavior.
10. We recognize that misbehavior comes from discouragement. We therefore do not label a child as "bad," but instead try to recognize the mistaken goals of the misbehavior that usually involve an attempt at searching for a place in the family or community, even if it is an undesirable place. We then look to find appropriate ways to encourage and empower the individual.
11. While we normally successful with a very wide range of students, we can never be right for every child. One of our greatest challenges is to be objective, compassionate, yet realistic in considering the needs of each child as a unique individual. When we fail despite our best efforts to work with the child to help him/her meet appropriate behavioral expectations within the school's fundamental ground rules, we sadly and reluctantly counsel the family to seek out another school setting in which the child can experience success.

#### **E. Community Service**

1. We seek to show and teach our students that the freedom and education they receive here come with the responsibility to help others in the community and those less fortunate but no less deserving. To show them that the responsibility to change our world for the better lies with all of us, and that service needs to be an accepted part of everyone's life if we are to achieve this goal.

#### **F. Our school teaches children to be at home in the world of nature.**

1. Strengthening our connection with nature and the environment is an integral part of DMS educational philosophy.
2. We seek to instill in our students, parents, and staff not only a respect for the earth, its waters, and all living things, but also a sense of stewardship for the environment based on a conviction of our individual responsibility for the beauty of the land and the health of our ecosystems.
3. We believe that being at home in the world of nature is basic to being a whole and healthy human being.
4. We consciously work to foster in each person a strong sense of belonging to the web of life. We accomplish this goal through:
  - a. Outdoor education, and field biology at every age level in the school, using the natural setting of our campus and the wide variety of natural resources around us as a classroom out of doors

- b. Gardening and small animal care
- c. Ecological studies
- d. Recycling and composting
- e. Stressing environmentally friendly packaging for lunches and all foods and products used in our community

**G. We are a family-friendly school.**

1. In establishing policies and procedures, we seek to remain sensitive to the needs, desires, and factors that might add unnecessary stress and pressures onto our families.
2. Our school seeks to include families of diverse backgrounds. Tolerance and understanding of one another is the foundation of our community structure.
3. Also, in establishing policies and procedures, along with setting the calendar of school events, we will attempt to avoid conflicting with the religious traditions and holy days of our families. We recognize that this at times may be impossible considering our diversity, but at the very least, every effort will be made to create a balanced and respectful approach to this issue.
4. From time to time, we will survey our families or hold special community meetings to explore how the school could be more family friendly.
5. We are a close-knit, inclusive community of students, educators, parents, and friends of the school

## H. Faculty

1. We carefully identify the duties and responsibilities of each position in the school
2. We carefully identify the skills and knowledge, experience, educational philosophy, core values, and interpersonal skills needed to be successful in each position at our school.
3. We take great care in our hiring process to find new members of our faculty and staff who bring the right mix of skills, knowledge, experience, values, and personality to succeed at our school. We conduct thorough reference and legal checks to ensure the safety of the students and the integrity of the school.
4. We will clearly communicate to all members of the faculty and staff our expectations, values, personnel policies, benefits and professional development opportunities that may be applicable to their positions.
5. We will provide consistent, objective, qualitative, timely and constructive evaluation and feedback of staff performance. We will encourage individual initiative, collaboration and communication with community members (other staff and parents), self-evaluation, and continuous professional growth.
6. We provide ongoing support, financially and administratively, to our staff to continue formal professional development.
7. We will provide our staff with a salary and benefit package that is highly competitive with other local private schools and regional Montessori schools. We recognize that while we may never be able to provide wages that are commensurate with the importance of the work that our staff does, we will endeavor at every step to ensure fair and competitive wages.
8. We consciously follow fair and equal employment practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, and compensating both teaching and non-teaching staff members. We endeavor to employ persons solely on the basis of the factors necessary in the performance of the job and the operation of our school without discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, race, national origin, gender, and any other factor on which discrimination is prohibited by the laws of the jurisdiction within which our school is located.
9. No official of our school will seek to induce a teacher who is under contract at another school to break that contract. [There is nothing deemed improper if a member of the teaching or administrative staff of one school independently approaches another school about possible employment and teacher training].
10. We will make a reasonable and lawful effort, when considering the employment of the faculty or staff of another school, to contact the Head of the school at which the applicant is presently employed (or committed for the upcoming school year) to request a frank evaluation of the candidate's qualifications. This information will be considered absolutely confidential.
11. Our school will take all reasonable and lawful precautions to maintain the confidentiality of records and information concerning teachers and other staff members who are applying for employment at another school, in accordance with the rights of the individual.

## I. Facilities

1. We will deliberately seek to create a campus of timeless beauty that communicates to our students that the buildings and grounds are expressions of our love and commitment to their education and success.
2. We endeavor to maintain our physical environment in like-new condition.
3. Our buildings and grounds will support the implementation of our educational program and institutional mission as ideally as possible.
4. Buildings will not be constructed for the sake of having space. Each will be carefully considered in terms of need, ideal space and configuration, and integration into the pattern language developed for our master plan.
5. The school will have a campus large enough to include areas set aside for children to experience and explore the natural world.
6. The school will do everything in its power to provide a healthy environment for students and staff. Wherever possible the school will:
  - a. Use non-toxic cleaning products.
  - b. Use non-toxic, integrated pest management.
  - c. Maintain IAQ (Indoor Air Quality) – construction materials, practices, heating and ventilation.
7. School will work to reduce the environmental impacts of its facilities and operations in:
  - a. Construction
  - b. Energy use (efficiency)
8. The school will consciously follow safety procedures designed to protect students and staff:
  - a. All power tools, fuels, paint removers, and other hazardous substances will be kept in a safe designated area.
  - b. Wherever possible, no lawnmowers or other potentially hazardous machinery will be used during regular school operating hours.

## J. Finances

1. Our school honors its financial commitments to parents, staff, vendors, and others on a timely basis.
2. We operate on a balanced budget.
3. Tuition will be set on the basis of what it costs to insure the quality of our educational programs, to retain the best teaching staff, and to maintain our campus (inside and outside) to a standard that will appeal to present and prospective families, while considering affordability by local families.
4. We are committed to making this experience truly inclusive by pursuing funding sources to offer scholarships for families who are unable to fully fund their child's Montessori education themselves. We will set aside a portion of our tuition income every year to support the school's financial aid program.
5. We will maintain a reserve fund for unexpected expenses or lower than expected enrollment. The goal for our reserve fund is 3-6 months of operating expenses.
6. We will communicate accurate information about the financial state of the school in an annual report to the community.
7. We strive to operate without depending on income from fundraising projects.
8. We will strive to operate with the least possible debt, and make debt reduction a priority when making financial decisions, wherever possible.
9. We expect all of our families, as members of our community, to honor their financial obligations to the school in a timely and responsible manner.

## K. Recruitment and Admissions

1. **Admissions:** Our primary goal in the recruitment and admissions process is to help each family find the perfect match between its values and goals, what will work best for the individual child, and our school.
  - a. A Montessori student can never be replaced. Our primary goal in the process of admissions and recruitment is to find families for who the school will be an ideal match. We are seeking families who share common values and goals with the school, and who, after careful consideration and exploration, have concluded that our school is something that they want very much for their children.
  - b. In making admissions decisions, we will weigh many factors, placing the greatest emphasis on whether the parents are deeply committed to sending their children to our school, hopefully for the long run, whether there are siblings of the child already in the school (or as alumni), and the age of child.
  - c. It is our hope that the children who we admit in the early years will graduate from our school. Ideally it will be so much a part of each family's life that eventually the children of our graduates will attend our school as well. We want to be a family tradition.
  - d. In the admissions process, we consciously treat parents with respect as partners in exploring whether or not we would be the perfect match for their child. We do not use gimmicks, such as the hint that spaces are filling up fast.
  - e. We will not try to convince prospective parents that our school is right for them and for their child. Instead we will tell the truth, educate them on the Montessori philosophy to help them to grasp the true nature of the school and what it has to offer, and allow them to weigh all the factors out as they consider whether our school is indeed the right match for them and their child.
  - f. We will welcome prospective parents with open arms and make it as easy as we can for them to learn what our school is really all about:
    1. We will hold open houses at least once a year and gladly schedule individual tours during school hours.
    2. We will make a list of the names and home phone numbers of parent ambassadors available to prospective parents who would like to speak with another family.
    3. We will arrange frequent and convenient times when prospective parents can visit our classrooms.
    4. We will spend as much time with prospective parents as possible in order to answer their questions, address their concerns, and assist them in determining whether it feels to them as if our school would be a good match for their child.

5. We will consider applications for admission on a case by case open admission basis. We will do our best once an application has been received to:
  - a. Arrange for the student's visits and evaluations.
  - b. Gather all of the information needed to evaluate the application.
  - c. Schedule all meetings and interviews in the timeliest manner possible.
  - d. Make and communicate all admissions decisions to the families as quickly as possible.
2. **Non-discrimination:** DMS does not discriminate on the basis of race or color, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, age, ancestry or national origin, or any other unlawful basis with respect to student admissions or employment. We consciously teach children to accept, respect, and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the global community.
  - a. We regard a mix of backgrounds and abilities as a positive and important element in our community.
  - b. We seek to maintain a school community that is reflective of our local community's socio-economic diversity.
3. **Truth in Advertising:** As an accredited American Montessori Society school, we pledge to represent our school truthfully and accurately to the general public and internally to our parent community.
4. **Negative Public Relations:** We further pledge ourselves to respect the diversity of the community of Montessori schools. We will not engage in negative public relations nor make any negative statements about another Montessori school.
5. **Student Needs:** If, after admitting a student, it should ever become clear that a student is not benefiting from the school's program, or if the school is not the best program to meet his/her needs, we will promptly consult with the parents.
6. **Student Transfers:** Our school recognizes each family's right to visit and consider other schools and to hold preliminary discussions regarding admission without feeling compelled to notify the school, which their children presently attend.
7. **Montessori Schools:** While we welcome inquiries and interest in our school, we will never knowingly attempt to enroll a student who is presently enrolled in or committed to attend another Montessori program.
8. **Release of Records:** Before filing an application for admission, we ask that families advise their children's present schools and authorize in writing the release to us of their children's academic records and student recommendations upon our request.

## L. Building Community

1. We recognize that a Montessori school is more than a place of learning; it is a community of children and adults, and that that community has a significant impact on our students' capacity to learn, grow, create, develop, assimilate values, and relate peacefully and respectfully to other people and to the natural world.
2. We treat all students, families, teachers, and staff members with kindness, warmth, and respect.
3. We consciously work to build a constructive partnership between the family and school in support of each child's educational development.
4. Within reasonable guidelines established to ensure the integrity of our educational program and the privacy of other students' records, parents are welcome to visit the school to observe their child in class or to review his/her academic progress.
5. We believe that every member of our community has a fundamental right to be treated with respect, regardless of age.
6. We place a primary emphasis on building relationships with families as early as possible in order to help parents recognize the uniqueness of their child. We also work together to enhance the parents' ability to parent.
7. We believe that the experiences children have, both at home and at school, in the first six years of life, are the most important of their lifetime. During the first six years of life children's concept of themselves, of the world and of their place in it is formed. What they will attempt, and whether or not they will succeed at it, is profoundly influenced by these beliefs about themselves.
8. We are an extended family community whose participants are supported at all levels by all others in the community.
9. We consider input from all of our community members in our decision making processes in order to take into account the needs of our total community. We are committed to the creation of programs that stress personal development for all members of the community.
10. **Parenting Support and Education:** We encourage parents to participate in programs that can help them to refine their parenting strategies and to facilitate the development of independence, responsibility, self-confidence and self-respect in their sons and daughters and in themselves. We recognize parenting as an extremely difficult, rewarding and valuable job for which we have had little preparation and for which in the modern world we get little support. We are committed to find ways to provide that support for families through programs and community events at the school.
11. **The Parent Ambassador Program:** We understand the special needs of new participants in the community and the necessity of a program to match new families with ones experienced in the community to provide support and information.
12. **Commitment to the Community:** We expect all members of our community, students, parents, teachers and support staff to be committed, contributing members of the community, and to show support for the rules, regulations and principles established by the community, and we are prepared to support them in this effort as in some cases it may involve a paradigm shift.



## M. Administration

1. The primary role of our school's administration is to provide educational leadership. Business and financial decisions will be made in light of their impact on the integrity of the educational program and core values of the school.
2. The Head of School reports directly to the Board of Directors.
3. The primary role of the Head of School is to articulate the core values and vision, provide academic leadership, take leadership in the admissions and recruitment process, build community and reduce attrition among students and families, recruit and coach faculty members and staff, oversee the financial health of the school, serve as the school's primary spokesman to the larger community, and lead the process of internal self-evaluation and long-term planning.
4. The Head of School will ensure that excellence and consistency with our values and vision permeate the school seamlessly from class to class, from level to level, and from one year to the next.
5. The Head of School will support the school's faculty and families. The ultimate factor on which difficult decisions must be balanced is what is best for each individual child and what is consistent with the core values of the school.
6. When conflicts arise within the school, whether they involve parents, staff members, students, or administrators, every attempt will be made to find the best and highest resolution of the issues under dispute that is most consistent with the school's fundamental values and is most oriented to a win-win model.
7. The administration of the school will ensure a smooth and timely flow of communication about important dates and information to parents, students, and staff.
8. The administration will follow a collegial model in working with faculty members and staff, inviting their input and participation whenever appropriate in important questions facing the school.
9. The administration of the school will honor and protect both the child's and family's right to privacy in all matters related to that child's progress and interaction at the school.

## N. Governance

1. The Board of Directors shall be comprised of people who share a deep sense of commitment to the school. In all matters, they consider the overall best interests of the school over their own interests or over the interests of any constituent group within the school community.
2. The primary responsibility of the Board of Directors is to establish and regularly examine and refine the institutional identity, mission, and core values that define the nature of the school.
3. To avoid a conflict of interest or undue influence, the Board of Directors bylaws dictate that parents, major vendors, and staff are ineligible to serve on the DMS Board.
4. The mission, institutional identity, and core values and beliefs will be set down in writing in this working document called the “Blueprint.”
5. When voting on motions and making decisions the Board of Directors will consult the Blueprint to identify the underlying values and beliefs that would support their decision and motions.
6. If the Blueprint does not address the issue, or if the Board concludes that the Blueprint needs to be amended to *more completely address or define* the school’s underlying values and beliefs, it will amend the Blueprint before voting on the motion.
7. If the Board deems that an underlying value or belief of the school should be *fundamentally changed* then it will solicit input from the school community, including staff and parents, prior to making such an amendment.
8. The minutes of the meetings of the Board will reflect not only the motions passed, but the text of the underlying elements of the Blueprint.
9. Except for confidential issues, the major actions of the Board will be communicated to the school community.
10. Concerned parents and/or staff members may request an opportunity to be heard by the Board at a scheduled Board Meeting, in writing, or by contacting the Board President.
11. The Board will ensure the maintenance of a grievance procedure for parents in the school’s Parent Handbook, and for staff members in the school’s Staff Handbook.

## O. Fundraising/Development Committee

1. Every gift given to our school is accepted as a generous gift in support of our work, no matter how large or small. Gifts of time, labor, materials or money are all recognized as equally valuable contributions to the success of our school.
2. We do not require families to participate in small fundraisers throughout the year. We limit fundraising activities to major programs, such as the Annual Fund and Spring Service Auction. In each of these, our goal is to encourage 100% family participation rather than to emphasize the size of gifts given. Each fundraising event will include elements that inform attendees about our school as well as raise money.
3. Along with fundraising activities, we also seek to increase visibility of our school within the local community by offering monthly one-hour tours of our campus to individuals and groups. Each family is encouraged to refer interested tour guests to the development committee, for the purpose of introducing them to the school and the Montessori methodology. These guests will then be included in our bi-annual newsletter mailing list and will be invited to our spring event.
4. While donations of funds, tangible goods, services, or real property are deeply appreciated, the school can never accept any gift that would require it to violate any of its core beliefs outlined in this document.
  - a. While individuals wishing to donate funds to the school are welcome to designate the use to which they may be used, it is up the Board of Directors to establish policy about who will decide on behalf of the school if they can be accepted in light of the conditions established.
  - b. Only the Board of Directors can accept a gift of real property or tangible goods on behalf of the school that would potentially require the expenditure of funds to repair or maintain.
5. The Board of Directors will help promote the school's fundraising efforts, wherever possible.