



MONTESSORI
CENTER SCHOOL



Position Statement
Head of School Search
Montessori Center School

Goleta, California
Start Date: July 1, 2024



Montessori Center School of Santa Barbara

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OVERVIEW

Montessori Center School of Santa Barbara is a tight-knit and inclusive community of teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students nestled amid blossoming gardens, shade trees and an abundant variety of both indoor and outdoor learning spaces. Founded in 1965, the school provides students ages 18 months through 12 years old with a high quality, compelling Montessori education in a supportive and nurturing environment. Teachers place children at the center, holding their happy, healthy growth and learning with kind-hearted, open, and warm respect. Classrooms hum with productive children immersed in well-designed academic challenges, while teachers stoke each child's curiosities and passions in an individualized program. The school seeks an inspired and collaborative leader, who will prioritize the needs of teachers and students, capitalizing on the many strengths of the school while facing its challenges with forthright and strategic determination.



MISSION

"Our mission is to honor and develop the whole child from 18 months through 6th grade. We provide a nurturing educational environment authentic to Montessori principles by fostering independent, compassionate, respectful, self-motivated, creative life-long learners who will become positive forces to care for and transform our world."

CORE VALUES

Development of the Whole Child: We nurture the social, emotional, mental, spiritual and physical development of children to prepare them for life.

Academic Excellence: We create a rich academic environment in which students achieve their full potential as independent, curious, and resourceful thinkers and learners.

Learner Empowerment: Through collaboration and individualized support, we guide students' love of learning through exploration and the unique expression of their interests, skills and talents.

Family and Community: Through the Montessori principle of grace and courtesy, we engage as a supportive community by living the mission of Montessori Center School

Respect for All: We cultivate respect for self, others, our environment, and our global community.

"The primary goal of a Montessori education is to help each child reach his or her full potential in all areas of life. The child's emotional, social, spiritual, physical and cognitive needs and interests are considered to be inseparable and of equal importance." —American Montessori Society

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STRENGTHS AND DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF

- MCS boasts a highly experienced and credentialed teaching faculty, dedicated to the compelling Montessori ideals, and eager to translate these ideals into the lives of children.
- A nimble, flexible, and experienced administrative leadership team manages the school; the two Associate Heads of School have a combined 31 years of experience at MCS.
- Specialists in the subjects of Art, Drama, Library, Computer Skills, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish provide enriched learning and creative growth for children.
- A trained, dedicated, and responsive learning specialist works to enhance the learning environment for both students and teachers.
- The teacher to student ratio in pre-primary is 1:6, and 1:12 in primary and elementary.
- Upper elementary students, 4th-6th grade have the opportunity to participate in interscholastic soccer, basketball, volleyball and flag football.
- MCS has built a competitive salary scale and generous benefits package for faculty and staff.
- The school's STEAM program is being developed in a fully outfitted STEAM laboratory.
- MCS's involved Board of Trustees includes results-oriented committee work and deep dedication to the health and vigor of the school.
- Staff ensure strong "next school" preparation; the school's graduates flourish and remain engaged and committed to MCS.
- Students embrace experiential learning both in and out of the classroom. Lower Elementary students enjoy two overnight camping trips, while Upper Elementary students take multi-night trips to Yosemite, Astrocamp and the Santa Barbara Channel Islands.
- The school's commitment to the Montessori ideal of "grace and courtesy" is evident in students' personal and social development; children at the school are engaged, polite and kind.

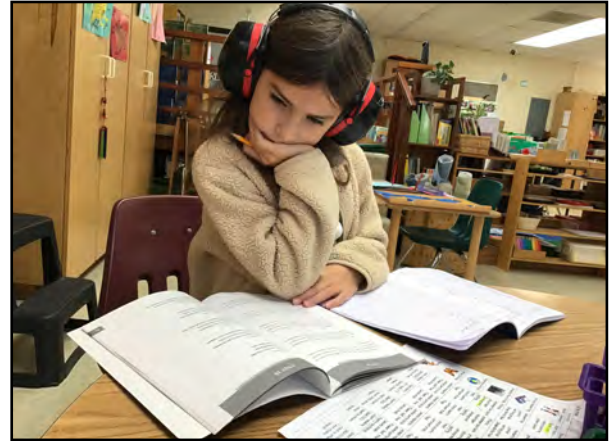
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CAMPUS

In 1997, the school leased a five-acre campus from the Goleta Unified School district and has created a network of portables that house spacious, light-filled classrooms that more than meet the needs of the school's 18-month-old through 6th grade students. There is a STEAM room, library, art studio, multi-purpose room with a stage, and rooms dedicated to before-and-after-school care. The most delightful aspects of the school campus are its gardens; each room has both play and workspace out-of-doors with the Santa Ynez mountains and Los Padres wilderness as a backdrop. The campus feels tucked away and quiet—an oasis for learning and play. Admissions materials accurately describe how the “beautifully designed campus and inviting classrooms convey a sense of order and harmony.”



COMMUNITY

Trustees: Montessori Center School is managed by a small group of trustees (13) who are all (but one) current parents. The board has seven committees (executive, finance, strategic planning, committee on trustees, site, development, and marketing) and a history of excellent leadership. Some years ago the board made the decision to purchase an 11-acre property in the hopes of building a permanent home for the school. With zoning and financial challenges (it is currently zoned agricultural), there are active questions about the best strategic move; the board hopes to expand and explore options for a future site.



Parents: The school parent community is actively engaged at the school, with an organized community of volunteers (Montessori Parent Organization, MPO) who support teachers, organize the much-loved Harvest Festival and Jog-a-Thon, work tirelessly to plan an auction/gala fundraiser, and gather together for “STEAM night” that celebrates the new facility, the product of parent fundraising. Parents step up enthusiastically when



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asked to assist teachers with field trips and special learning experiences, and create special staff appreciation events. There is deep enthusiasm for the school program and community, especially its “down-to-earth” ethos; MCS parents enjoy the sense that the school is a simple, grounded place for families to flourish.

Faculty: The teaching team is extraordinarily strong and effective. All of MCS’s head classroom teachers have Montessori training credentials or are in the process of completing their training. All faculty and staff are dedicated to the mission and core values of the school and enjoy autonomy designing curriculum for their students. There are specialists in art, music, physical education, Spanish, library, and technology. The school’s most experienced teacher has been in the classroom for over 30 years, while others have joined the team during or shortly after the pandemic. The school supports professional development, underwriting the cost of Montessori training for teachers new to the particulars of Maria Montessori’s philosophy and practice.

Students: In true Montessori tradition, the school is divided into four age groups: Pre-Primary (ages 18 months to 3 yrs.) Primary (ages 3 to 5) Lower Elementary (ages 6-9, grades 1 through 3) and Upper Elementary (ages 9-12, grades 4 through 6) with mixed-age classrooms at all levels. Students love the school, bounding in each morning, and leaving reluctantly at the end of the school day. They are clearly and completely “at home” when they are at MCS; every student is known, and both parents and students relish the tight bonds that connect the community. With mixed-age classrooms, students form lasting friendships. One of the hallmarks of Montessori education—kind and open support of one another—is visible throughout the Montessori Center School community. Families bring racial, ethnic, religious, educational and professional diversity to the MCS community. Over 30% of families are people of color.



“MCS won us over at first visit with the calming beauty of its campus, the sincerity of its teachers, the variety of extracurricular classes, and its size, which seemed just right—not so big that there was no sense of community, but not so small that that it felt insular or clique-ish. We also appreciated that MCS did not exude any sense of pretension or extravagance. If it did, we would have felt out of place.”

—MCS family

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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Montessori Center School of Santa Barbara is ready and excited about the next phase of the school's journey. While there are challenges to face, there is most definitely a "little engine that could" spirit and energy that abounds across constituencies. The school is hungry for its exceptional program to continue to thrive; there is palpable energy and openness to face the hard decisions and move the school forward. Key opportunities and challenges include:

Communication: Excellent, open and frequent communication both internally and externally is both an opportunity and a challenge at Montessori Center School. Amongst faculty there is a shared sense that more effective communication on routine matters will make daily life much more efficient; robust conversation about substantive matters will lift engagement and morale. Regular and thoughtful communications to parents and the broader community from the Head of School (and other members of the leadership and teaching team) will help parents feel a part of the community and understand the pedagogy

and practices at MCS. Highly effective communication for the external community will tout the researched benefits of the Montessori philosophy and help parents navigate through the myths and inevitable questions about Montessori practices as they choose a school for their children.

Enrollment and tuition: The school currently has 200 students and has capacity for 270; as recently as 2022-23 the enrollment was 233 and peaked at 244 a few years prior to that. Historically, some families leave the school for kindergarten in public or other independent schools. There are few (if any) applicants for the open kindergarten spaces in the mixed primary classroom. Some students also leave after 5th grade, seeking larger peer groups in middle school. The next Head of School will face a complex marketing and outreach challenge, as well as a more internally focused effort to engage all members of the faculty and staff in improving retention and bolstering the recruitment of new families. Tuition in the elementary program at MCS is significantly lower than other independent schools in the area. The next Head of School will need to join with fellow administrators and the board to study the demographic, geographic and market realities, striving to better position the school

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for optimal enrollment and set tuition at a market-appropriate rate. Several of the key assumptions about enrollment and tuition will merit rigorous analysis.

Equity: Efforts are under way to build equity in the compensation of teachers and staff. A careful load analysis, full benefits study and further efforts to openly communicate the comp guidelines will build trust and morale amongst the faculty, staff, and administrative team.

Site: The school has rented its facilities for 58 years. Currently it leases its campus from Goleta Unified School District. With an eye to long-term sustainability, the next head of Montessori Center School will join the board of trustees in exploring opportunities to find a permanent home or negotiate further stability in its arrangement with GUSD.

Fundraising: Montessori Center School is eager to ramp up its fundraising, building both capacity and inclusion in its Annual Fund and Gala, and exploring more ambitious fundraising capacity for longer-term strategic goals.

Team-and-Trust-Building: The next MCS leader will promote harmonious and constructive relationships among all of MCS's professional staff by establishing an atmosphere of collaborative team building and planning. By placing emphasis on an organizational culture that permits diversity, equity and inclusivity among all members of the faculty and staff, the next Head of School will foster productive working conditions, supporting training and robust professional development of all faculty and staff.

Financial and Strategic Planning: The next Head of School will join with the board of trustees (as well as the Associate Head of School, Director of Finance & Operations, and Director of Admissions) to carefully steward the school's finances, setting and overseeing budgets that focus resources on teaching and learning and ensuring that the school enjoys long-term, financial stability. Strategic initiatives, whether related to the long-term site, or to fundamental financial underpinnings of the school (tuition, financial aid, enrollment in the four divisions) will be central work of the partnership between the Head of School and Board of Trustees.

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THE POSITION

The ideal candidate for the headship of Montessori Center School will be an educator who is familiar with and willing to embrace and deepen understanding of the Montessori approach. The next Head of School will need to be a warm and accessible presence, a collaborative and engaging team leader, an astute strategic and financial planner, and a “natural” marketer and storyteller. Communication skills will be paramount, as well as a demonstrated skill at working with all constituencies of the school community: trustees, teachers, students, parents and alumni. In addition, a willingness to reach out and connect the school in a meaningful way with other independent schools, both in the Santa Barbara area and beyond, will be important in determining the strategic direction of the school.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Montessori Center School has retained Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support the search for its next Head of School. To apply, interested candidates should prepare a cover letter, a current resume, and a personal statement and submit these materials online at: <https://rg175.com/candidate/login>.

For an initial inquiry or to nominate a potential candidate for this exciting leadership position, please contact RG175 consultant Catherine Hunter cshunter33@gmail.com

Application Deadline: Monday, October 30, 2023
Start Date: July 1, 2024

Montessori Center School does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, sexual identity, age, religion or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law.