



MONTESSORI SCHOOL
OF FORT MYERS
A PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

ANNUAL REPORT

2015 – 2016 SCHOOL YEAR

Our Mission Statement: Montessori School of Fort Myers follows PEACEFUL principles to provide an individualized approach to nurture each child's natural love of learning. We shape independent, confident, out-of-the-box thinkers by teaching life skills through hands on experiences and peaceful conflict resolution.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

To Our Community Members _____	1
Looking Back: Accomplishments from the 2015 - 2016 School Year _____	2
2015 - 2016 School Year Survey Results & Commentary _____	3
Facility Improvements _____	6
Students & Staff _____	7

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

To Our Community Members

This is our school's second annual report in which I seek to highlight the hard work of our cheerful staff, generous parent volunteers, curious students, and other members of our learning community over the past year. This was my third year as Head of School and, by far, our best. A lot of hard work put in over the past few years is now showing strong benefits for our entire learning community. Our students are joyfully learning, our parents are connecting with each other and forming new friendships, our staff are happy and living our school's mission, and we have concrete plans in place to continue improving.

In April 2016, our school sent out a 2015-2016 school year survey to our families and we received 29 responses from about 60 families. The results attempt to quantify how our community members feel about the various programs and policies currently in place, the level of parent interest in new potential initiatives, and what our parents value the most about our school. The information that we have learned from these results has been used to guide decision making and planning for the coming school year. Because the results are so interesting, I have decided to summarize and share them with our learning community in this report.

I recently read an article by Julia Volkman "What you'll See in a Great Montessori School" which summarizes my feelings towards the state of our school at the moment. Ms. Volkman writes:

"You'll know if it's a good school or not because it will make you think...what if the world were like this? What if everyone knew that they had something valuable to do and that they could do it on their own or with others, at their own pace, and get help if they needed it? What if everyone could apply themselves to work that matched their interests and strengths? What if everyone helped to care for the physical environment and helped those in need? These are the questions you will find yourself pondering while you relax into the observation chair of a good Montessori school."

And so I invite you to come observe your child to see what happens throughout the day at our beautiful school. You'll be happy that you did!

James M. Farwell
Head of School
May 5, 2016

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Looking Back: Accomplishments from the 2015 – 2016 School Year

Let's take a minute to look back a year ago at what we planned to accomplish during the 2015-2016 school year. As outlined in the "plans for the 2015 - 2016 school year section" our annual report from last school year (2014 - 2015 school year), I am happy to announce that we achieved five out of the six stated objectives.



Improve record keeping in the primary environments.

Done. We began using Montessori Records Express (MRX) in the primary environments in August 2016 and released detailed progress reports for the first time to parents during the January 2016 conferences. Implementation of MRX has resulted in the older children receiving more of the higher level lessons, better communication with the parents, and simplification of the tracking and lesson planning process for the lead teachers.

A screenshot of a table used for tracking curriculum. The table has multiple columns and rows, with some cells containing text and others containing checkmarks or numerical data. The text in the cells is too small to read clearly, but the table structure is visible.

Provide additional evidence that the Montessori curriculum, including our scope and sequence, meets or exceeds Florida early learning standards and common core standards.

Done. We have posted everything here:
<http://msfortmyers.com/programs/curriculum/>



Begin writing the self study for American Montessori Society (AMS) school accreditation.

Done, with more accreditation groups than anticipated, and we are ahead of schedule on the accreditation process. We ended up choosing to accredit with not just American Montessori Society (AMS) but also the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA), and Association of Independent Schools of Florida (AISF) to prepare us for offering an elementary program in the future. We completed a draft of our self studies in March 2016 and plan to turn in the self studies by the end of May 2016. Our site visit is scheduled for October 9-12, 2016 and we hope to be awarded accreditation in Spring 2017. Going through this process has caused a significant amount of positive changes for our school.



2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Implement a gardening and fruit tree orchard care program.

Fruit tree orchard done, garden in progress. This school year, our students picked 300+ fruit from our little fruit tree orchard that we planted in spring 2015. Our students picked tons of star fruit, pink guava, white guava, sugar apple, mango, and avocado. This coming summer, we are hoping that our lychee and jaboticaba will yield fruit and we are planting banana and papaya trees. This program is really beginning to bear fruit! Yes... pun intended.

As of May 2016, we are in the middle of construction of an edible garden. Once built, we will have a formal gardening and fruit tree program where there is a dedicated weekly time to spend in the garden and orchard learning to cultivate edible foods.



Hold three parent education nights

Done. We had great topics and good attendance.

2015 – 2016 School Year Survey Results & Commentary

1. School Events

- a. All of our school events and parents teacher conferences were well enjoyed. We learned that we need to find ways to better promote the parent development nights and parent advisory board meetings. The event eVites seem to have been particularly helpful for our parents.

2. Current activities: rate your enjoyment of the following activities

- a. Facebook Friday – 27% “Enjoy”, 63% “Love it!”
- b. Morning carline drop off - 25% “Enjoy”, 64% “Love it!”
- c. Special Classes: Music Together – 21% “Enjoy”, 69% “Love It!”
- d. Special Classes: Physical Education – 23% “Enjoy”, 46% “Love it!”
 - i. We currently work with an outside company, UPlay, for our physical education program. As of mid May 2016 we will no longer be working with UPlay and will be taking this program in house. We are buying new sports and outside activity



2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

equipment, creating a binder with activity ideas, and will have one teacher offering an option for organized play during morning outside time and aftercare. This is a nice new initiative for our children who will soon get organized outdoor activities everyday instead of just once per week!

- e. Special Classes: Library – 35% “Enjoy”, 38% “Love it!”
- f. Monthly theme guide published on website - 41% “Enjoy”, 31% “Love it!”
- g. Primary only: MRX software – 20% “Enjoy”, 50% “Love it!”

3. Currently planned activities: rate their importance

- a. Accreditation with National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA) – 52% “Important”, 22% “Very Important”.
- b. Accreditation with Association of Independent Schools of Florida (AISF) – 52% “Important”, 19% “Very Important”.
- c. Accreditation with American Montessori Society (AMS) – 44% “Important”, 44% “Very Important”.
- d. Primary Students Only: Starting a gardening program where we would grow all edible foods and have volunteers help the children in small groups three days per week. – 38% “Important”, 38% “Very Important”.
 - i. We began garden construction in April 2016 and will begin this program in beta mode over summer 2016 with the full program beginning when we plant eatable foods in late September 2016. Eatables will be grown September – April, flowers from April – June, and fruit picked throughout the year especially during heavy fruiting July - September.
- e. Primary Students Only: Opening outdoor classroom for use during the morning and afternoon work periods. – 45% “Important”, 35% “Very Important”.
 - i. Our primary lead teachers began meeting in April 2016 to discuss purchase of materials and full implementation of this initiative.
- f. Toddler: Various renovations and upgrades to the toddler playground. – 31% “Important”, 62% “Very Important”.
 - i. Some renovations were done in April 2016 with more planned for May and June 2016.

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

4. Potential new initiatives: Rate your level of interest.

Here are the survey results for some potential new initiatives. We will look into all of them and make no promises other than we will do our best to see if we can make some of these things happen.



- a. A healthy balanced lunch served five days per week from a local catering company. Cost would be about \$4 per day, the menu would rotate monthly, would not always be organic ingredients, and parents could still choose to send their own lunch if not interested. – 35% “Somewhat interested”, 38% “Very interested”.



- b. Afterschool (3:00 - 6:00pm) private classes at an additional cost: piano – 31% “Somewhat interested”, 38% “Very interested”.



- c. Afterschool (3:00 - 6:00pm) private classes at an additional cost: violin – 28% “Somewhat interested”, 28% “Very interested”.



- d. Afterschool (3:00 - 6:00pm) private classes at an additional cost: ballet – 36% “Somewhat interested”, 25% “Very interested”.



- e. A Spanish immersion class option at the primary (3-6 years old) level. Your child would only be spoken to an allowed to speak Spanish during the first or second half of the day. – 33% “Somewhat interested”, 44% “Very interested”.



- f. Adding a carline pick up option at 12:00pm and at 3:00pm where you would come through the driveway and an assistant teacher (possibly not from your child's class) would help your child into your car, similar to morning drop off. The parent would stay in the vehicle the entire time. This would result in faster pick up, but less communication with your child's lead teacher. – 11% “Somewhat interested”, 29% “Very interested”.

5. Quality of Program

- a. I feel that my child is academically enriched – 25% “Agree”, 64% “Strongly agree”.

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

- b. I would recommend our school to a friend – 11% “Agree”, 86% “Strongly agree”.
- c. I am satisfied with my experience at our school – 14% “Agree”, 79% “Strongly agree”.

6. Comments & Suggestions

- a. We received so many kind and encouraging comments and wish to thank our parents for that!
- b. We also received some constructive criticism which has been shared with the appropriate persons, is equally appreciated, and has been acted upon. A few things in particular that I want to address:
 - i. Toddler West bathroom cleanliness. Even though we mop the current painted cement floor on a daily basis, the surface is rough and looks a little dirty even though it is clean. I agree that it looks bad, so we are replacing the floor with a nice wood print vinyl, repainting the floor boards and walls (R.I.P. fish mural) for a cleaner bathroom.
 - ii. Release times. We can get better at releasing the children at a more precise time. If release time is 3:00pm, our goal is to be within 2 minutes of that time. We have discussed this and will improve to show respect for our parents’ time.

Facility Improvements



- 1. Access Control & Security
 - a. Completed an access control system so that now people seeking to enter the property need a password.
 - b. Installed the remaining surveillance cameras, we now have 8 cameras covering the vast majority of the exterior of the facility.
- 2. Toddler playground
 - a. Added several sails to increase shade.
 - b. Re-did the swing set so that children have swings that don’t travel as far, meeting their vestibular needs and making the playground a little safer.
 - c. Added cabinets for the teachers to use.
 - d. Plans for the next year - Add a water spigot with a small hose. This will allow us to add and irrigate a small garden and add a water table.
- 3. Primary Playground
 - a. Added an obstacle course made out of stumps and wood.
 - b. Plans for the next school year - replace swing set, install rock climbing wall, open outdoor classroom.
- 4. Grounds
 - a. Replaced main facility sign with beautiful log sign.

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

- b. Parking Lot – currently in talks with a contractor to deal with the water drainage issue so people don't get feet wet during the summer when it rains.

Students & Staff



We Grew 45%. From June 2015 to May 2016 we grew student enrollment from 51 to 74 students (45% growth) and staff from 14 to 19 (36% growth) staff members. We added several new teaching positions and found another wonderful substitute which allows our staff to take time off as needed. As our school's enrollment strengthens, we are able to offer more programs and initiatives to our learning community!

Professional Development



1. **Total Hours.** All staff members (that weren't hired during the year) completed an internally-required minimum of 24 hours of professional development when the State of Florida only requires 10.
2. **Conferences.** All but one of our staff attended the Montessori Foundation's three day conference in Sarasota, FL in November 2016 and several of our staff attended the Andrew & Dora McGhee Montessori Foundation conference in Miami, FL in January 2016.
3. **Redirecting Children's Behavior** – In June 2016, five of our staff will be training to become instructors for the 15 hour course, Redirecting Children's Behavior. We will be studying under Kathryn Kvols, teacher trainer and author of *Redirecting Children's Behavior*.
4. Ms. Livia Adams (Toddler East) began the infant and toddler teacher training program at Summit Montessori Teacher Training Institute (SMTTI) in Davie, FL and should receive the American Montessori Society (AMS) teaching credential in summer 2017. Ms. Livia completed Montessori infant and toddler training in 2006 and has chosen to take this course as a refresher.
5. In June 2016, Ms. Sarah Bruhn (Red Door Lead Teacher) and Kayla Iannuzzo (Green Door Assistant Teacher) are expected to complete early childhood training (3-6 years old) at Summit Montessori Teacher Training Institute (SMTTI) in Davie, FL and will earn their American Montessori Society (AMS) teaching credentials.
6. In July 2016, Head of School James Farwell is expected to complete the American Montessori Society administrator credential at Seton Montessori Institute in Clarendon Hills, IL. He completed 73 hours of professional development this school year, visited four other Montessori schools, and attended four education related conferences during the school year. Mr.

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

James also helped found and became a committee member in the newly emerging Montessori Alliance of Florida.

7. In addition to hundreds of cumulative hours of meetings and initiatives, we invested over \$15,000 in the professional development of our staff which is a significant investment for a school of our size.

Montessori School of Fort Myers
2151 Crystal Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33907
Tel (239) 936-4515
www.msfortmyers.com