



Davis Joint Unified School District

MONTESSORI MASTER PLAN
2009 - 2014

DAVIS JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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“The child learns everything without knowing he is learning it, treading always the path of joy.”

- Maria Montessori

INTRODUCTION

This master plan was created in collaborative meetings with Parent/Guardians, teachers, and administrators of the Davis Joint Unified School District, and members of the Davis Montessori community. The plan states the desired qualities for the Montessori program, and is not a statement of what is lacking in other district programs and schools, nor is it intended to be a detailed guide for implementation. The philosophical tenets in this model are meant to complement the ideas and practices of existing DJUSD programs.

PROGRAM MODEL

Philosophical Tenets

The Davis Joint Unified School District is dedicated to providing a high quality Montessori program in a public school setting.

The Montessori program is one that allows children to learn at their own pace, according to their individual needs. It is a whole child approach, focusing on the child’s cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs. With an environment that is nurturing and calm, and prepared with a wealth of appealing learning activities, the Montessori classroom provides an educational experience designed to bring out the child’s natural sense of wonder.

Each classroom is carefully prepared and maintained by a Montessori teacher. It is well equipped with a unique set of learning apparatus, which are used to provide hands-on educational experiences for the children. Through these hands-on experiences, the children develop a concrete understanding of basic principles about the world (including principles of math, language, science, and social studies). These principles will be used as building blocks for more complex ideas as the children advance through their studies and will provide a solid foundation for learning. Montessori credentialed teachers go through extensive training in the use of these materials.

Montessori students are able to increase their knowledge through both independent and teacher-initiated activities. Students may make choices about the work they will complete in a given day or week. The Montessori teacher serves as a guide in this process and ensures that the child is making appropriate choices and progressing in their learning. Students are given opportunities to make discoveries and to engage in extended explorations. Through these experiences, they are encouraged to become self-directed and, as a result, develop a high level of responsibility. As caretakers of their own learning, students feel empowered, and are motivated to excel.

Integrated throughout the Montessori curriculum is an emphasis on the development of mutually respected relationships, compassion and other humanistic qualities. Children are encouraged to become independent critical thinkers, ask provocative questions, develop a multicultural

awareness, and adapt to new situations. These ideals are deemed necessary in developing a caring attitude toward all living things, all cultures, and the world around us.

In following these ideals, we are dedicated to fostering the growth of confident, responsible, and adaptive citizens who are life-long learners and problem solvers.

“If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder... he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.” -Rachel Carson, The Sense of Wonder

Montessori Classroom Objectives Compared to Non-Montessori Classrooms

Teachers in all public school programs are accountable to impart education covering the California State Standards at every grade level. In the Montessori classroom, the standards are covered through the use of the Montessori material and curriculum. The objectives of the Montessori curriculum compare and surpass those of the California State Standards. In many cases the Montessori curriculum allows teachers to provide a much wider breadth of information.

DJUSD uses a variety of resources for aligning the Montessori curriculum to the California state standards, including the Montessori Curriculum and State Standards. This alignment guide was developed by the W.H. Taft Montessori Academy, which is a magnet school of the Stockton Unified School District. It is a standard in the field of public Montessori education. The guide covers the disciplines of Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, History and Social Studies for kindergarten through the sixth grade.

Transition from DJUSD Montessori Classroom to DJUSD Non-Montessori Classroom

Because Montessori students must meet the same learning standards as all students in California, Montessori students generally transition to a regular education classroom with little-to-no difficulty. This is, in part, because the Montessori curriculum prepares students to adapt to new situations. An example of an adaptation that a Montessori student may face is an adjustment from a self-initiated learning experience to a more teacher directed learning experience.

When a student transitions from a Montessori K-6 classroom to a regular K-6 classroom, documents will be shared with the receiving teacher, showing the academic areas covered, student achievements, and standardized test results. Parent/Guardians and students may also choose to meet with the receiving teacher.

The transition for 6th to 7th grade will include Parent/Guardian and student meetings with teachers, counselors, and administrators, as exists in the district's traditional education programs.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Registration

Students are enrolled in the Montessori Program annually on the basis of the following criteria:

1. All students eligible to attend Davis schools may apply.
2. New students are encouraged to enter the program at kindergarten or the first semester of first grade. Entrance into the program may occur at another time if the student is from another Montessori program or has the mutual agreement of the sending and receiving principals and teachers. Consideration will be given as to how well the individual student will adapt to and benefit from Montessori methods, as well as how the transfer will impact the makeup of the class as a whole.
3. Registration will be handled by the school site.
4. Siblings of children already enrolled in the Montessori Program will receive first priority for placement.
5. In the event that there are not enough vacancies to accommodate all applications, spaces will be filled by a lottery.
6. Parents/ Guardians shall complete an Intent to Return form annually if the child is to be assured continued enrollment in the program.
7. Parents/Guardians retain the right to disenroll their child from the program. Staff recommended disenrollment of a student may be done in consultation with the Parent/Guardian, teacher, principal and appropriate support staff.

Promotion/Retention

Students in the DJUSD Montessori program shall follow the district's established policies in regard to promotion and retention.

Class Configurations

Class configurations will be reviewed annually. Recognizing the importance of the three year span and the traditional Montessori age groupings based on planes of development, DJUSD will seek to achieve stable class configurations consistent with Montessori philosophies (grades pre-K, 1-3, 4-6). Each class will include a well- balanced division of ages to ensure social and academic development. All classroom configurations will be dependent upon enrollment requests and the district's needs in consultation with the parent/ guardian (including the need for students to experience being both the youngest and the oldest in a class).

Program Outreach

To remain a viable and thriving program in the DJUSD, community and parent awareness of the Montessori program is vital. Information regarding Montessori theory and how it is presented in our public schools shall be easily accessible and readily available. Information about the Montessori options will be made available through the following avenues:

- A strong web presence will be maintained for the Montessori program in three distinct ways:
 1. The DJUSD district website will offer easily found current information on the Montessori program, with links to the Birch Lane website and the Montessori website
 2. Montessori information will be available on the Birch Lane website
 3. A dedicated website for the Birch Lane Montessori program will be maintained by school staff with input from the MPAC.
- A pre-registration information night will be held
- Information about the Montessori program will be directed to preschools and the media prior to registration.
- MPAC will appoint a volunteer outreach coordinator each year to ensure active community outreach about the Montessori program and to explore opportunities for wide information dissemination.

PROGRAM EXPANSION

The DJUSD Montessori program seeks to build a stable and thriving program within the district. DJUSD will make every effort to accommodate all district students seeking to enter and continue in the Montessori program.

The horizontal and vertical expansion of the DJUSD Montessori program will be considered when enrollment requests warrant an expansion in conjunction with Parent/Guardian interests, and if the district determines that requisite resources (including facilities, budget and staffing) are appropriately available in the context of overall district needs.

Subject to resources availability, DJUSD may consider expansion of the program to other sites if requests for the program exceed the capacity or grade span of the current school site.

Horizontal and vertical expansion of the program will be considered based on the following priorities:

- Horizontal expansion is the first priority. Adding additional elementary classrooms to strengthen enrollment is necessary before considering expansion to preschool or junior high levels
- Once horizontal expansion has reached a level appropriate to sustain a robust multiple classrooms program, vertical expansion will be considered first at the preschool level. The

goal will be to accommodate students whose families qualify for state - funded preschool programs in public schools. This will serve to:

- Help strengthen enrollment in the elementary program.
 - Preserve traditional Montessori model of age groupings (3-6, 6-9, 9-12).
 - The second priority for vertical expansion, as Parent/Guardian interest warrants, will be to develop a junior high program through grades 7, 8 and 9. DJUSD will consider program expansion to incorporate pre-K through grade 8 or 9 at a single school site. Parents will be surveyed on a regular basis to determine interest level for a junior high program.
- DJUSD will evaluate Montessori program growth and the need for a self-contained site on an ongoing basis, particularly in light of other district- wide initiatives such as school configuration changes.
 - DJUSD recognizes the need for continued funding for Montessori classroom supplies to accommodate horizontal growth.

STAFFING

Teacher Recruitment and Employment

DJUSD will continue to recruit Montessori-trained teachers for both Montessori and non-Montessori positions. DJUSD will use the same criteria when hiring Montessori teachers as it uses for hiring any other teacher in the district, with the additional qualification that the teacher has earned a Montessori credential from the American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). Candidates with equivalent training in Montessori methods, demonstrate skills, knowledge and ability to teach in a Montessori classroom may also be considered.

In order to effectively recruit the most qualified candidates. DJUSD recognizes the importance of rigorous recruitment procedures. To this end, DJUSD will conduct ongoing, aggressive nationwide recruitment in order to establish a Montessori teaching pool. Suggested avenues should include, but not be limited to:

- Recruitment of student teachers from Montessori colleges in the area
- National Montessori websites and colleges and training centers
- Edjoin
- Attendance by district representative (teachers, principal, parents,) at Montessori conferences

After conducting a rigorous, national search, priority consideration will be given to candidates in the following order:

1. Candidates with an AMS/AMI credential and a California State teaching credential
2. Candidates with AMI/AMS credential but no California credential hired as a long term sub until he California credential is completed
3. Candidates with a California credential and training or experience equivalent to AMI/AMS credential; hired as a long term sub until AMS/AMI credential is completed

Montessori interview panels will include equal numbers of teachers and parents as well as the site administrator.

Principal Recruitment and Employment

In the event of a vacancy, DJUSD will work to recruit a principal who understands the philosophical tenets of a Montessori program, is willing to be an active leader to support the needs of the program.

Professional Development

Each Montessori teacher may submit requests to attend conference(s) and visit other classrooms/programs within the district or outside the district. Such requests would include the costs of substitute teacher time if needed for the DJUSD teacher to do professional growth.

In addition, on-going staff development in the Montessori Method, as well as traditional district in-services, are available through the normal processes the district uses to support the professional development of teachers.

In alignment with the expectations of a Montessori Program, teachers will regularly be provided time to engage in collaborative time to engage in decision-making, exchanging ideas, and calibration of the program implementation. Teachers will also be expected to dialogue regularly with the non-Montessori teachers on staff.

PARENT/GUARDIAN/GUARDIAN AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Parent/Guardian Education

The following opportunities to support students in the Montessori program are offered to Parent/Guardians:

1. Home-To-School Link

Understanding of Montessori philosophy and curriculum is vital to maintaining a link between a child's classroom and home experiences. To that end, Parent/Guardian orientation to Montessori philosophy and an introduction to classroom apparatus will be provided.

Parent/Guardian workshops may be offered, with possible collaboration between DJUSD and Montessori preschools within the Davis community.

2. Parent/Guardian Volunteers

Parent/Guardians who are volunteering in the Montessori classroom will be encouraged to be familiar with the philosophy and the apparatus, and to follow the lead of the teacher.

3. Resources

DJUSD will develop an on-site Montessori library with books, periodicals, and videos in the same way that the district provides such resources for all educational programs in the district, for use by teachers and Parent/Guardians.

A summary document with an introduction to Montessori philosophy, as well as practical information such as web sites and reading lists, will be distributed to each family enrolled in the DJUSD Montessori program at the beginning of the school year.

Advisory Committee

An advisory committee of Montessori Parent/Guardians, teachers, and administrators will assist in planning and coordinating proposed Montessori activities in collaboration with the school district, the school site, and the community. This partnership will help to make a positive impact on the students and families served.

The functions of the Montessori Advisory Committee may also decide to address the following:

- Coordination of scheduling for program integration and services.
- Development of Parent/Guardian education programs.
- Development of a record system for student learning, to be shared with and utilized by public and private Montessori schools.
- Collaboration for ongoing staff development.
- Collaboration for community celebrations and cultural programs.
- Development of a Montessori newsletter.
- Development of a program information packet.

Collaboration agreements with the University of California at Davis and other institutions of higher education may include:

- The incorporation of university resources to expand the experiences of the students enrolled in the DJUSD Montessori program.
- The development of a plan whereby university students may participate in lab experiences in a Montessori classroom.
- The development of a university program, in conjunction with AMI and/or AMS teacher education centers, which will offer teachers in the greater Davis area a locally

accessible Montessori credential program, with the potential for a Masters Degree in Montessori Education.

- Research opportunities for the university, including a longitudinal study of student achievement in the DJUSD Montessori program.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Teachers

The evaluation process currently utilized by DJUSD, based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, will be the foundation for teacher evaluation.

Evaluation of Students

The district-adopted standards-based reporting system, including state-mandated assessments, will be used for evaluating students and will be adapted to indicate student progress in the Montessori program. This reporting system will be reviewed, as needed, to ensure that it identifies the abilities of the student and aligns to the Montessori program.

Evaluation of Program

A program evaluation will be conducted in consultation with AMS/AMI affiliated organizations every other year to ensure that the program meets the needs of students and the expectations of Parent/Guardians , maintains the integrity of Montessori education, and is aligned with state and district standards. The evaluation will include classroom observations and individual teacher interviews as well as program alignment with the guiding Montessori principles and the Montessori Master Plan. The results of the program evaluation will be presented to the DJUSD Board of Education and the MPAC along with commendations and recommendations for improvement.

FINANCIAL/FACILITIES IMPACT

One-Time Start-Up Costs

Montessori classrooms require the use of unique support materials. As the expansion of the program is considered, the feasibility of purchasing appropriate resources will be a consideration in the approval of the expansion. The one-time only, start-up cost for each Montessori classroom is approximately \$24,000. The apparatus purchased is of such quality that it typically lasts for over 20 years.

The costs of technology would be the same for a Montessori classroom as for a regular classroom. It is important to note that the use of technology in the Montessori classroom is a vital part of the total curriculum, in the same way that it would be in a regular classroom.

Ongoing Classroom Instructional Materials and Supplies

Ongoing classroom supplies are funded in the same manner as the District and site funds such needs in other DJUSD classrooms and programs. As is normal for regular classrooms and teachers, ongoing costs to maintain the Montessori classrooms and Montessori teachers may include the following:

- Consumable costs for the upkeep of classroom resources including, the utilization of materials for science experiments and practical life materials (e.g. as in food preparation activities). Costs will vary according to supplies needed.
- Annual teacher requests for materials, supplies and professional development.
- Materials that are purchased as a part of routinely scheduled core curriculum adoptions and provided to all DJUSD classrooms.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If applicable and desired, explore state waivers that would help DJUSD implement Montessori education in ways consistent with the DJUSD preferred model.