

Is Montessori For You?

Underlying the Montessori curriculum is a fundamental belief that each child has an instinctive and spontaneous desire to learn and that self-motivation is the only true impulse to learning. In the Montessori classroom, individual responsibility for behavior, along with respect for people and property, accompanies the freedom that students enjoy. In collaboration with observant teachers who assist with goal setting and ensure steady achievement, children move themselves toward learning. They learn at their own pace and pursue materials and topics that are of interest to them.

To be successful, entering students must be able to learn to make choices, cooperate with peers, develop and maintain a sense of order, demonstrate self-discipline, function independently, and participate non-competitively in a classroom community. They must find intrinsic satisfaction in work well done instead of seeking extrinsic rewards or pats on the back. Students with diverse learning styles—primarily auditory, visual, or kinesthetic—will find many stimulating and appropriate activities at Ridgeline. Students who are highly distractible may find our environment too stimulating for their learning needs.

Montessori Philosophy

Ridgeline Montessori's educational program is based on the philosophy and methods developed 100 years ago by Dr. Maria Montessori. The basic principles of these theories are as follows:

- Every child begins life with an inner drive to explore and discover the world around her. This innate curiosity will lead to productive learning if given the proper environment, resources, and guidance.
- Academic, social, and emotional development are interdependent; education must center on the development of the whole child.
- Learning is most productive when it's self-directed and founded on individual interest.
- In younger children, learning is most effective when it takes place through direct sensory experiences and interaction with objects in their natural context.
- Cognitive development follows a predictable progression from the concrete to the abstract. There are specific moments when each child is most ready to develop and acquire certain skills. Educators must understand these levels and introduce material at appropriate times.
- Information should be presented in a pattern of whole-to-part, and integrated through interdisciplinary study, so students can place it in context and understand how things are related.
- Learning can be enhanced and applied, especially in later years, by going out into the community.

When these principles are pieced together, they form a foundation for motivated learning and high achievement, thus meeting our mission to produce graduates who reach their full academic potential and are self-reliant, productive citizens.

Pedagogy and learning materials are the most compelling difference between Ridgeline Montessori and other schools. Although the basic academic content of the curriculum is the same, the following elements are key to a Montessori classroom: distinctive Montessori materials; the prepared environment; teacher's role; individual learning contracts; long, uninterrupted work periods; interdisciplinary approach; multi-age classrooms; and enhanced curriculum.

The Montessori Materials

Carefully designed materials are at the heart of a Montessori classroom. Each material embodies a particular concept or skill but addresses many levels of understanding, beginning with the concrete and

moving to the abstract. Many materials are self-correcting and provide students with feedback, thus reinforcing autonomy, confidence, and self-motivation. Used in the non-competitive classroom, the materials allow each child to develop at his or her own rate. Extensive written materials and available computers support the Montessori emphasis on research using both primary and secondary sources of information. Concepts are introduced with a "key experience" lesson from the teacher. Learning is reinforced as students work with sequenced materials and record or expand upon their activities in writing.

The Prepared Environment

Dr. Montessori created what she called the "prepared environment," designed to encourage self directed learning. The classroom is arranged in learning areas, with clusters of student sized tables and open areas for floor work. Shelves of materials pertaining to a particular area of study surround each learning area. The materials are arranged systematically and in developmental sequence. Students are free to move about the classroom choosing resources and working individually or in small groups as they pursue their work plan.

Teachers and Their Roles

At Ridgeline Montessori, each classroom of 28–30 students has both a teacher and a trained assistant. Montessori teachers are rarely the center of attention in the classroom. Instead, the teacher is one source of information among many and the focus during work times is on each student working at his or her challenge level. The teachers prepare the environment, observe the children carefully to determine skill levels and readiness, offer appropriate activities, and facilitate the process of "learning how to learn." Montessori teachers also actively model appropriate, respectful behavior and positive conflict resolution. Class meetings are held weekly and decision-making follows a consensus model.

Enhanced Curriculum

Ridgeline has correlated the Montessori Scope and Sequence with the Common Core State Standards to ensure full coverage of both curricula. The Montessori elementary curriculum strongly emphasizes math and language, then uses them to study other subjects including anthropology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, economics, geography, geology, government, history, philosophy, physics, political science, and sociology. Art, music, and Spanish are part of the integrated Montessori prepared environment as well as being subjects that are taught in their own right. Physical education is provided twice weekly. Technology is a tool that supports all other curriculum areas.

Long, Uninterrupted Work Periods

Whole-class instruction time is minimal; the school day is structured to allow students to spend long blocks of time on work that they choose within the framework of their contract. This schedule enables students to explore a topic or material thoroughly and to carry it through to completion.

Interdisciplinary Approach

Subjects are not taught in isolation; they are related thematically to each other. Students are taught to use reading, writing, and math as tools for the pursuit of knowledge and skills. This approach motivates students to master the basic skills and use them in understanding material in the content areas.

Multi-age Classrooms

Students are grouped in multi-age clusters spanning two to three years in the elementary program. Multi-age classrooms serve to: maximize curriculum options available to students; encourage cooperation and minimize competition; provide opportunities for indirect learning for younger students; foster self-confidence in students who serve as role models; and provide for long-term teacher/student relationships.

Work Plans

Elementary students organize their learning according to work plans that they develop with their teachers and update regularly to reflect progress. These contracts set forth how the student will complete the curriculum requirements. Students and teachers track work weekly to ensure they are fulfilling their goals. Individual students progress at their own rates and level of learning.

Our Expectations of Ridgeline Families

We expect our students to learn to balance their freedom to explore with their responsibility to learn.

We ask the same of our families: we ask that you balance your freedom to choose a Montessori education for your child with your responsibility to support your child and the school with your time, talents and resources.

1. Support your student's education

Each Ridgeline family is expected to ensure that their student attends school daily and arrives on time,
read and understand the material that comes home from school,
learn about Montessori education,
respond promptly to school requests,
communicate clearly and respectfully with other community members,
AND
model the values that we try to instill in our students

2. Support the school with your time and talents

Each Ridgeline family is expected to volunteer 40 hours every year
AND
record those hours for school records

3. Support the school financially

Each Ridgeline family is expected to contribute to the school's fundraising efforts. Fundraising keeps our classrooms fully staffed and allows us to care for our school building while also providing additional, essential opportunities such as PE, arts and counseling.

Fundraising at Ridgeline

As a public charter school, Ridgeline Montessori receives only 80% of the per-student funding of a standard public school.

Plus, we must provide our own facility!

So, each family is expected to volunteer 40 hours a year, pay a \$75 annual supply fee

***AND** contribute to the school's fundraising efforts.*

Why are we fundraising?

That 80% funding number means that this year's Ridgeline students did not receive \$380,000 that they would have seen at a comparably-sized neighborhood public school.

Ridgeline Montessori is committed to providing a quality, public Montessori education.

Much of the funding we do receive goes to our classrooms: delivering a quality, public Montessori education requires expertise and materials beyond those you find in more conventional classrooms.

However, we want more for our students: PE, arts, counseling and a solid roof over their heads are among the "extras" we agree to provide for our students. We provide these and more through our fundraising.

How can I contribute?

There are many ways you can contribute. Below are just a few.

Directly— Just give. Whether in one big check or in a monthly donation, donating directly to the school is the easiest, most cost-effective way to give. Each year a suggested per-student number is provided to families in their back-to-school packets.

Community Fundraising Events— Community events can be fun fundraisers too. Events like the book fair, the student craft fair, the annual pasta dinner, read-a-thon and jog-a-thon each provides opportunities for giving. These are great chances to volunteer and get involved in the Ridgeline community!

Restaurant Nights—We partner with local restaurants throughout the school year. Dine out on these nights, and the restaurant will donate a portion of your purchase to the school.

Passive Fundraising—Take the time to register with programs like eScrip and AmazonSmile and designate Ridgeline as your beneficiary. Earn money for the school every time you shop. Instructions and opportunities will be provided in your back-to-school packet.

What else should I know?

Fundraising at Ridgeline Montessori is led and driven by parent volunteers.

Each year a group of dedicated volunteers step up to coordinate our efforts, but responsibility for raising money lies with all of us.

Consider how you will help. Need a great first step? Become an active member of the Ridgeline Community Organization (RCO). Joining is easy: just show up!

And please always, always remember:

Your time and support ensure that quality Montessori education remains accessible to *all* children.

It is a rare and valuable gift you give.
Thank you!

Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School

Student Lottery Application, 2018-19 Applications due: Wednesday, 3/7/18, 4:00 PM

Please read the attached article prior to completing this application.

Incomplete or illegible applications will not be processed.

Today's date _____ Information session attended _____

Student's name _____ Nickname _____

Date of birth _____ Grade entering _____ Gender: _____

School district _____ Current school _____

Is there another student in your family who would like to apply at this time? YES** NO

Name _____ Grade _____ Current school _____

****A separate lottery application must be completed for this student.**

Parent/guardian #1 _____

Street address _____

City, state, zip _____

Cell phone _____ Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Employer _____ Email _____

Parent/guardian #2 _____

Street address _____

City, state, zip _____

Cell phone _____ Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Employer _____ Email _____

Has your child had experience in a Montessori classroom before? _____ If so, at what ages(s)? _____

Where did you learn about Ridgeline Montessori? _____

Describe your child's learning style. Please consider his or her motivation, ability to follow classroom rules, and interest in working independently or collaboratively. _____

Has your student been identified for any of the following (circle if yes):

TAG (Talented & Gifted) ELL (English Language Learner) SPED (Special Education) 504 Plan Other _____

Are there any special concerns for your child that you feel we should be aware of? _____

Does the student currently have an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan)? Yes No

If yes, is the special education team supportive of your student attending Ridgeline Montessori? Yes No

Why do you feel that Ridgeline is the right placement for your student with special needs? _____

Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School will not limit student admission based on disability, race, color, gender, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital status, socioeconomic status, cultural background, familial status, physical characteristics, or linguistic characteristics of a national group.

Has your student ever been expelled from a school? Yes No If yes, when and why? _____

Why do you feel that a Montessori education and environment are right for your child? _____

What role do you see yourself playing in your child's education at home and at school? _____

At home, how do you encourage your child's growing independence? _____

What limits and expectations in child guidance are particularly important to your family? _____

What are some of your family's favorite activities (individually and together as a family)? _____

How would you communicate your concerns if you had a problem with the school? _____

Students born before September 2010, **hand-write** 3-5 full sentences. Attach extra paper, if needed. Tell us about one of your best learning experiences (in school or out).

In conclusion, please share what one quality, experience, or lesson that you hope your child will embrace during his or her time at Ridgeline Montessori. _____

Falsifying information on the lottery application will disqualify the student from inclusion in the enrollment lottery. I certify that the information provided above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Parent/guardian signature

Parent/guardian signature

Return to: Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School, 4500 W. Amazon Dr., Eugene, OR 97405