



Bishop Hamilton

Montessori School

PROGRAM STATEMENT



December 2016

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HOW DOES LEARNING HAPPEN

Bishop Hamilton Montessori School's (BHMS) interpretation of Montessori pedagogy and programming is consistent with the Minister of Education's Policy Statement as set out in "*How Does Learning Happen (HDLH)?*"

BHMS holds the view that all children are competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential. Montessori pedagogy places the child at the centre of the learning environment with staff and materials as a means of taking on the mantle of their own development.

The school is dedicated to supporting children's learning, development, health and well-being through caring and responsive Montessori trained educators, who focus on active learning, exploration, inquiry, and who see children and their families as competent, able and active participants in all aspects of the program.

Bishop Hamilton's "Portrait of a Graduate" illustrates the attributes, and outcomes that BHMS students can develop when parents, teachers, and the School work collaboratively to foster the development of their child's academic, social, emotional, physical and spiritual growth. BHMS communicates and seeks parent commitment / partnership through the "Parent School Partnership Agreement". The Parent School Partnership Agreement is reviewed and signed annually by parents. It communicates what parents can reasonably expect from BHMS and what BHMS expects from parents as all parties: parents, school, and teachers work jointly towards the development of their children.

It is important to note that Montessori pedagogy often describes children's activities as 'work' where HDLH describes children's activities as 'play,' but the activities, as experienced by the children we serve, are one and the same.

This Ministry statement describes our goals for children at BHMS and the approaches that we implement to meet those goals. This Ministry program statement will be reviewed with BHMS staff annually or when an amendment is made, to ensure it remains true to our vision.

HEALTH & SAFETY

BHMS promotes the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children in our care by diligently meeting all the requirements of Ontario Regulation 137/15. We execute and accomplish this by:

Health and Nutrition

- Encouraging nutritious eating at snack and mealtimes based on Canada's Food Guide and access to drinking water throughout the day.
- Teaching and executing the importance of personal hygiene - "Practical Life" Montessori lessons such as: hand washing, sneezing techniques, or blowing one's nose.
- Communicating and enforcing a Healthy School Policy to parents regarding keeping children at home when they are unwell as set out in the "Communicable Diseases" reference guide.
- Enforcing public health guidelines regarding quarantines for various illnesses and immunization.

Safety

- Safe School practices through a locked door system and FOB access to premises by parents.
- Daily arrival and dismissal sign in and out procedures.
- Implementation of sensible, solution-based rules and guidelines regarding outdoor play.
- Complying with Ministry requirement regarding staff CPR / First Aid staff training including Police Checks for the Vulnerable Sector.

Community and Well Being

We guide the children we serve to interact and communicate in a positive way. We also guide and support their ability to self-regulate by:

- Creating a stable environment where children remain with the same teacher and mixed age Montessori community for three years. This Montessori model provides many opportunities for children's growth and development as they learn to interact within a classroom community consisting of children older and younger than themselves, and with adults.
- Offering positive, non-punitive direction to every child to support the classroom communities.

This approach allows for the development of harmonious environments throughout the school, where children can develop their self-regulation and executive functions in a safe and nurturing classroom and school community of children and adults.

OUR PROGRAMS

BHMS plans for and creates positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development is supported by using the Montessori curriculum and materials that have been proven through research to be effective with children from all socio-economic and cultural groups.

Prepared Environments Fostering: Independence, Self-Confidence, Community

BHMS fosters the children's exploration, work, and inquiry by having fully equipped child centered Montessori Prepared Environments. We plan for and create positive learning environments by following the Montessori method of child development. Montessori programs have been shown to develop executive function and gentle play by connecting to the social, emotional and cognitive developmental needs of the child.

Within our Montessori non-graded classes of mixed ages, children are introduced to activities or lessons with hands-on concrete materials. Children choose their own activities and progress at their own pace. The highly social atmosphere of this environment stems from a unique combination of freedom and structure rooted in respect.

The non-graded classes of mixed ages is reflective of society as a whole, creating a community where children are free to explore and progress at their own pace, learning from each other, all under the guidance of a trained adult.

Motor Control and Sensorial Exploration

BHMS recognizes that there is a relationship between a child's mastery of movement and the development of self-image. Children are able to move freely in our safe environment allowing them to explore the physical world and to develop trust in their body and self-image. The Environment provides many opportunities for children to practice and master gross and fine movement.

The materials and activities are also rich in patterns and sensorial experiences. Children are able to explore and refine all of their senses and to discover sequencing and order.

Child Initiated Exploration and Inquiry, Self-Regulation, Responsibility

BHMS provides child-initiated and adult-supported experiences. All Montessori materials and activities are introduced to the children by a Montessori Guide or by another child. The Montessori Guides are always observing children to see what support each child might need. They are very sensitive to allowing children to use their own initiative, often resulting in children being deeply engaged and peaceful in what they are doing.

Adults are always observing to determine the right moment to introduce a child to a new activity or material. This tailored approach ensures that children have enough time to master an activity or material, but are also being gently challenged. Choice, respect, responsibility and self-regulation are foundations on which our programs are built.

Language & Cognitive Development

Children build their receptive and spoken vocabulary through interactions with materials and activities consisting of real objects and precise language through the use of familiar and new vocabulary. Children acquire language as they use their voice by observation and listening and through relationships with peers and adults. Our Montessori guides provide the children with the opportunity to participate in the expression of real ideas and emotions.

The materials and activities within our classrooms enable children to investigate, solve problems and engage in critical thinking. Unique Montessori materials, puzzles and activities such as puzzles for spatial concepts, matching, sorting, and counting games are introduced. Stories, poems, songs, and various activities are used daily for language development.

Artistic Expression and Culture

Artistic expression includes a wide range of activities for cutting, colouring, painting, exploring colour, shape and texture, and pasting. Children understand where everything is kept and they are able to choose and return things independently.

Culture covers a variety of materials and activities. Children are exposed to geography through flags and puzzle maps, zoology and botany through plant and animal classification, and music through bells and daily singing.

Self - Discipline / Regulation

The development of inner discipline in a child is always the goal at BHMS. Self-discipline is fostered in many ways. The classroom environment is organized in an orderly and logical manner. Children choose work that they are capable of doing and are free to use it as long as they wish without interference from others. This approach alleviates many problems of discipline that might arise in another kind of environment. In addition, the mixed age group gives the younger children an opportunity to emulate the more mature behaviour of the older children.

Children are disciplined in a positive manner at a level that is appropriate to their actions and their ages in order to promote self-discipline, ensure health and safety and respect the rights of others. Methods of discipline are contained with the school's policy and procedures; they are discussed at staff meetings to ensure consistency in disciplinary measures.

Indoor and Outdoor Play

We incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of the children by allowing them to manage a great deal of their day. Children have the opportunity to explore the Montessori materials with purpose and towards self-development.

Outdoor play is encouraged during morning, mid and late afternoon outdoor sessions. Free play takes place in a natural setting, which includes grassed hills and yard, trees, play equipment and a sandbox. *Each afternoon, those children who still nap are offered a nap time, and those who are pre-school and not napping are offered quiet activities.*

Monitoring Student Progress

BHMS is in compliance with guidelines as set out by the Ministry of Education regarding student progress. In addition, as a Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators accredited School, BHMS complies with their equally stringent requirements regarding student progress and record keeping.

A summary of the various ways we track student progress is contained below:

- Individualized lesson plans and teacher tracking of materials or activities presented to students
- Individualized student observation and anecdotal notes
- Internal Behaviour / Developmental term summaries
- Issuance of two progress reports

We document and keep track of materials or activities presented to each child including all work each child is engaged in. We observe and document anecdotal information on each unique child including the classroom community as a whole.

We also observe and discuss concerns regarding social, emotional, developmental or academic challenges and determine how to support these challenges acutely and in a timely fashion. This is accomplished through bi-monthly department meetings with the School Director in addition to meetings as required. Department meetings and staff meetings encourage ongoing communication between staff regarding students and programs.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

BHMS has a vibrant and robust parent community. We rely on parent engagement, participation and communication. We view the parent relationship as a collaborative partnership collectively working towards the development of the children and community we serve.

We foster the engagement of ongoing communication with parents about our programs and their children's academic, social, emotional and spiritual progress.

Student Progress Communications

- Progress Reports – two times per year
- Parent Teacher Interviews – two times per year
- Student led tours of the classroom – two times per year
- Parent education evenings – three times per year
- Parent classroom observations – ongoing at parent request
- Written or verbal communication by Classroom teacher as required
- Face to face meetings as required

Administration Communication Practices

The School keeps families informed on the happenings of the School Community such as: programs, school events, community events, fundraising initiatives, Annual General Meetings. We achieve this by utilizing various communication platforms including:

- Direct email
- Social Media – twitter, face book, linked In
- Dynamic content web posts
- Auto-calendar notifications
- Weekly school tours and observations for prospective parents
- Annual orientation for new and transitioning students and their families
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Monthly Community Update
- Annual update and release of Parent Handbooks
- Annual update and release of Financial Handbooks

Administration keeps staff informed and current on school and community happenings by including them in all community communications. Administration undergoes annual review of the School's Policies and Procedures; Program Statement and Parent Handbook. Monthly all staff meetings and bi-monthly department meetings allow for further communication.

Building Community

Building Community within the school speaks to the School's mission, vision and Christian values. This is achieved in many ways be it within respective classroom communities or the community at large. These events allow parents, children, and BHMS staff to further enrich relationships, communication and community. Annual events include:

- Social BBQ
- Christmas and Spring Concerts
- Pancake Breakfast
- Grandparents' Tea
- Fundraising gala events
- End of year picnic
- Evening Parent Education Series Workshops
- Cultural celebrations
- Classroom Community potluck dinners or breakfasts

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

BHMS has a vibrant community. Creating awareness of local and global citizenship is at the heart of all that we do and introduce to the children we serve. The school and students engage in numerous local and global charitable fundraising efforts such as “Terry Fox Day”, “Help Lesotho” and “We Day”.

We are involved within local community activities with the children through:

- Visits to local museums and churches
- Field trips to local farms
- Guest theatre performances
- Guest science workshops
- Guest art / craft workshops
- Guest physical education workshops

The School Director represents our local Montessori community as a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators and is actively involved within the Montessori community.

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BHMS supports the continuous learning and organizational effectiveness through personal and professional development. We believe that ongoing employee development benefits BHMS, its employees and the children under our care, BHMS supports and encourages continuous learning, the broadening of knowledge and skills through personal and professional development. We use Montessori principles as a frame for our staff community; principles that nurture respect, collaboration, teamwork, mentorship, excellence, a love of learning, personal and professional growth.

Our commitment to the continued development of staff is reflected in a robust annual budget dedicated to professional development that any member of staff can access. In addition to scheduled Professional Development days, BHMS hosts annual in-house seminars, consultants and professional services dedicated to specific and relevant topics including guest speakers for our parent education speaker series.

Employees are encouraged to seek out conferences, workshops or courses that will further their professional development in addition to visiting other Montessori or non-Montessori environments for observations.

Staff return to work one week prior to the start of school, at which time all staff review and complete the necessary documentation required by CCEYA. Staff set annual goals for themselves in discussion with the School Director. This collaborative process involves setting plans on how the School will support them in the achievement of those goals.