

Intro to Golden Oak Montessori

Mission Statement

The mission of Golden Oak Montessori School is to provide students in grades one through eight in the Hayward area with the opportunity to acquire an education based on the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, with an emphasis on independent learning; hands-on materials for a holistic education; and mixed-age classrooms to encourage mutual teaching. Our school will actively recruit and serve a culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse group of students reflective of the Hayward district; promote an integrated multi-subject teaching and learning curriculum; and pursue an overarching aim of nurturing healthy community stewardship. Our goal is to educate children to be active, aware citizens with the skills and knowledge to participate meaningfully in the diverse and challenging new century.

Vision Statement

The Golden Oak Montessori School is guided by its vision to create a child-centered learning environment that involves families, educators, and the community in nurturing the whole child. We believe that school can provide creative, structured tools to support children in being active learners who care for their environment, value their diverse community, and who think and work both independently and collaboratively.

A Montessori classroom is unique because it offers:

- Individualized learning plans focused on the child's interests, not only the teacher's goals;
- Hands-on materials in a classroom designed to stimulate academic exploration;
- Multi-age classrooms where collaboration and leadership skills are practiced;
- Culturally sensitive materials and a globally and community oriented curriculum.

The cornerstone of our vision is a belief that each child has unique potential and a unique path of development. Our task is to provide an atmosphere of acceptance, respect, and trust so that creativity and a sense of civic responsibility flourish. Montessori philosophy at the elementary and middle

school level emphasizes the importance of self-paced learning, self-governance, and peer-teaching. We are a learning community which recognizes students, staff, and parents as integral and mutually-supportive elements.

As adherents to the Montessori philosophy, we believe that a school is a place to teach children about how to be better members of their community. We think Golden Oak can be a “community center” by offering a place for students and parents to come together for activities that celebrate our diversity, improve wellness and health, and show how to tread lightly on the environment while improving quality of life. We want our school, and our students as its ambassadors and innovators, to demonstrate how our cultures, our technological ingenuity, and innovation can improve our lives and community without causing harm to the environment. Through our school’s curriculum, facilities, and services to students and the community, we will strive to teach the values and practical solutions for environmental stewardship.

Golden Oak Montessori Elementary School will cultivate competent, responsible, adaptive citizens who are self-motivated problem-solvers and who are also profoundly attentive to the world and humanity around them.

Why is Montessori a Good Option for Academic Success in Hayward?

Golden Oak Montessori School will offer an alternative curricular approach to serve the diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, language, and educational backgrounds of Hayward students entering elementary school. We believe that the best way of meeting the challenges of this diversity is via a proven educational curriculum that has a track record of academic success—especially with minority students; small class size with individualized attention; and a commitment to community involvement.

The Montessori curriculum was originally developed to serve disadvantaged children and the philosophy of child-centered education has flourished worldwide because of its inclusiveness and its academic success. The idea of a Montessori charter school integrates the values of public education with the benefits of small teacher-to-student ratios; teachers who are both State certified and Montessori trained; Montessori hands-on materials designed for interactive learning; and a facility which allows collaborative projects such as gardening and specialized curricular offerings such as art, music, and environmental education. Montessori offers an approach that enriches “the whole child,” where the teacher is a resource, guide, and observer, and the child is an active learner.

The academic benefits of Montessori elementary education have been demonstrated, as in the recent Milwaukee study (Science, September 2006) of urban minority students comparing Montessori and traditional public education, which confirmed superior test scores for Montessori students. The National Institutes of Health ongoing study of learning disabilities (Montessori Life,

Summer 2004) also highlights the Montessori approach's success in teaching language, especially to Special Needs children. To see a more local example of public Montessori success, look at Eagle Peak, in Walnut Creek, which demonstrates academic triumph with its 2007 Academic Performance Index (API) rating of 10, ranking it among the top 10% of schools in the state, public or private.

The real success of Montessori may be the long-term achievements gained from the practiced skills of collaborative learning, time-management, and self-governance. The Milwaukee study cited above showed that students in the Montessori program "were more likely to respond to social problems with a positive assertive response" and "showed a more developed sense of community and social skills." (Science, September 2006)

Performance at Golden Oak Montessori will focus equally on State academic standards and character development. Montessori emphasizes that children develop positive character traits while they learn. Students will be evaluated by State competency exams, regular markers of academic progress and cognitive understanding, and by evaluations which focus on the following character traits of life-long learners: confidence and competence, independence, autonomy, intrinsic motivation, ability to handle external authority, social responsibility, good citizenship, and positive self-image.

We believe Golden Oak Montessori School's prospect of attracting and maintaining elementary students in our school district; Montessori's record of academic excellence; and ongoing community involvement will reflect positively on our Hayward School District.

Montessori Educational Philosophy

Dr. Maria Montessori developed her method of education more than eighty years ago to serve disadvantaged children in Rome. Since then, her educational philosophy has established itself in diverse communities worldwide because of its central distinguishing tenet: child-driven education.

Dr. Montessori recognized that the only sustainable foundation upon which to build a love of life-long learning is the self-motivation of the child. Ultimately, children must move themselves toward their own learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, and offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns and is motivated through learning itself.

Montessori philosophy is based on the principle that all children carry within themselves the person they can become. In order to maximize their physical and intellectual potential, students must develop a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline in an ordered environment. Dr. Montessori developed the "scientifically prepared environment" which encourages children to

learn according to their own capacity and learning styles and allows children at various stages of learning to flourish in the same classroom.

As the American Montessori Society summarizes:

“A Montessori program is based on non-competitive and cooperative activities that help a child develop a strong self-image, high levels of academic and social competence, and the confidence to face challenges.”

Encouraged to make decisions at an early age, Montessori-educated children are problem-solvers who can make appropriate choices, manage their time, and work well with others. They exchange ideas and discuss work freely. These positive communication skills build the foundation for negotiating new settings.”

“Research has shown that the best predictor of future success is a positive sense of self-esteem. Montessori programs, based on self-directed, non-competitive activities, help children develop the confidence to face change with optimism.”

Educational Goals and Objectives

The educational goals and objectives of the Golden Oak Montessori School are consistent with the Mission and Vision statements of the school and meet the State and School District’s educational objectives.

- 1. Promote Academic Excellence**
- 2. Develop the Skills of Successful Lifelong Learners**
- 3. Pursue a Holistic Education**
- 4. Create Strong Parent and Community Involvement**
- 5. Create a Healthy and Evolving Learning Community**