

Did you know that Montessori is an option in Helena's public elementary schools?

There are three Montessori classrooms in Smith, Central, and Broadwater schools, for a total of nine classrooms serving up to 192 students. Montessori classrooms differ from traditional classrooms in the following respects:

- Mixed ages (1-3 grade and 4-5 grade groupings)
- Students choose activities from a number of options to achieve goals defined in a weekly work plan
- Uninterrupted blocks of work time
- Students work with specialized hands-on educational materials
- Freedom of movement within the classroom
- A trained Montessori teacher



Students have the opportunity to mentor their peers, thereby reinforcing learning concepts. Parent and caregiver volunteers are encouraged to contribute in the classroom to offer the support needed to facilitate the individualization of work.

In our district, decisions about Montessori are best made in terms of what fits each family's needs. Montessori is not available at all neighborhood schools, so a child might have to travel outside his/her neighborhood to attend. When choosing Montessori, parents should be comfortable with the idea of their children using hands-on learning materials and learning methods different from those that they may have experienced in elementary school. Finally, parent participation is strongly encouraged as a key to student success.

How does the Montessori program operate in the Helena Public School District?

Every child in the Helena school district is eligible for the lottery at the end of kindergarten. There will be 36 guaranteed openings for rising 1st graders who enter the annual lottery. Vacancies in 2nd and 3rd grades are filled from the waiting list for their lottery year. Placements may be made in the 4th or 5th grade, upon administrative approval. The district funds classrooms at the same level as all other classrooms—salaries and benefits and overhead for those nine classes comes from the general operating budget. Helena Public Montessori Parents (HPMP) provides funding for scholarships for specialized Montessori continuing education, as well as for some Montessori classroom materials.

What should kindergarten parents do if they are interested in the Montessori program?

Kindergarten parents are invited to learn about this exciting opportunity for their child by:

- Completing an application form to enter your kindergartener in the lottery. Forms are due at one of the Helena Public Elementary Schools by 9:00 AM on March 22 or until 3:00 PM on March 22 at Smith Elementary or are available online at <http://www.helenamontessori.org>. and at <http://helenaschools.org>. You can also email a completed application to Jill Nyman at jnyman@helenaschools.org.
- Please make sure you receive a received receipt when you turn in your application!

The Montessori lottery for students entering first grade in the 2019-2020 school year will be held via computer on April 1. All selected applicants will be called that evening. All others will receive an email the next day. **The Helena Public Montessori Parents (HPMP) will host a Q and A session on Wednesday, April 3 at 5:30 at Smith School.** We highly encourage all selected families to attend this meeting.

For information on the Montessori method, go to <http://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori.aspx>. For additional information on HPMP, please see <http://www.helenamontessori.org/>.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOUR CHILD IS SELECTED FOR THE PROGRAM, YOU WILL HAVE TO ACCEPT OR DECLINE THAT SPOT WITHIN 3 DAYS. Please learn as much as you can and check out our resources to help with that decision.

Will my child qualify for bus transportation if they are accepted? We do not guarantee bus transportation for Montessori students. If you live on the east side and accept an east side placement (Smith or Central) or live on the west side and accept a west side placement (Broadwater) and a bus route is already in place then your student may be eligible. There will NOT be east to west side bussing or west to east side bussing available.