

mountaintop

MONTESORI



HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

Position starts July 1, 2026
Charlottesville, Virginia



MISSION

Mountaintop Montessori provides the greater Charlottesville community with an exceptional and authentic Montessori education, serving children and families from infancy through adolescence. Our campus is home to year-round programming in which children thrive through experiential learning, interactions with the natural world, and collaborative discovery.

VISION

At Mountaintop, the vision is of children who grow up with enduring curiosity, joy, and a deep sense of responsibility. It is a community where every individual is both cherished and challenged. The world is imagined as one enriched by these young leaders, creators, problem-solvers, and peace-makers.

Shared Values of Mountaintop Montessori:

- » A deep appreciation for the world as a place of wonder
- » Trust in the inherent potential of every individual
- » Guidance by the peace, order, and logic of simplicity
- » Intentionality in words and actions
- » A commitment to responsible stewardship of the Earth
- » Communication and connection rooted in empathy and compassion
- » Mindfulness of responsibilities as global citizens
- » A belief that embracing risk and failure fosters creativity and innovation
- » A foundation for all decisions, interactions, policies, and programs in the Montessori philosophy

INCLUSIVITY MISSION

Mountaintop Montessori's inclusivity mission is to create a more inclusive community in all aspects of the school, grounded in respect and appreciation for individual differences and our multicultural society. The school seeks to provide programs and resources that enhance knowledge and encourage understanding of inclusivity.





ACCREDITATION

Mountaintop is accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (since 2008) and the American Montessori Society (since 2006). Experienced VAIS and AMS educators review the programs and practices regularly to ensure that they meet these organizations' standards. These organizations provide the Mountaintop faculty and administration with invaluable resources, connecting them to current research and professional development opportunities.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees' main purpose is to ensure healthy and sound governance for Mountaintop with a focus on its long-term strength. It serves in a strategic capacity, working in concert with the Head of School for the benefit of all Mountaintop children, families, and the generations to come. The trustees are dedicated volunteers drawn broadly from the community, including parents of current and former students, former administrators, alumni and others who bring fresh and independent perspectives to board discussions.

FOCUS ON FAMILY

At Mountaintop, the school focuses on providing a first-rate Montessori education for all of the students. While not a daycare center, Mountaintop does offer many scheduling options to provide a consistent, nurturing environment for children whose families have busy work schedules.

MOUNTAIN TOP AT A GLANCE

- **Founded:** 1982
- **Grades Served:** Toddler (16 months) through Middle School (15 years)
- **Enrollment:** Approximately 260 students
- **Accreditations:** American Montessori Society (AMS) and Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS)
- **Tuition:** Varies by age and program; financial aid is available
- **Campus Size:** 9-acre garden campus
- **Facilities:** Greenhouse, wildlife habitat, gardens, chicken coop, playgrounds, gym, and athletic fields
- **Curriculum:** Authentic Montessori with multi-age classrooms
- **Co-Curriculars:** Art, music, Spanish, ecology, physical education, cooking, technology, and more





MONTESSORI'S DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

The whole curriculum is organized to serve students' developmental needs through carefully devised mixed-age classrooms. Students proceed through a detailed curriculum as a natural, enjoyable experience that satisfies his or her inner drive to learn and grow.

The 4 Planes of Human Development

Dr. Maria Montessori, trained as a physician, used her scientific background to develop an innovative approach to understanding child development. This approach divides the child's life into four six-year stages which together span birth to age twenty-four.

Mountaintop serves children through the first three of these stages. The faculty members observe each child throughout his or her development in order to understand what support is needed and to ensure appropriate guidance and challenge.

Stages at Mountaintop Montessori:

- **1st Plane:** Toddler and Children's House (ages 18 months to 6 years of age - Toddler through K)
- **2nd Plane:** Elementary (ages 6 to 12 - grades 1 through 6)
- **3rd Plane:** Middle School (ages 12 to 15 - grades 7 through 8)

Toddler

The three toddler environments encourage self-discovery with activities that promote toddlers' budding independence by helping students learn to separate from their parents and caregivers. The need for autonomy at this age is strong; the Montessori classroom provides a safe environment where children can practice their burgeoning skills. Children are naturally drawn to activities that will meet their developmental needs.

- Open to students from 16 to 36 months
- Four-morning (Monday-Thursday) or five-day/week programs
- Year-round enrollment is available
- Pick up is available at 11:45 am (one classroom) or 3:30 pm (two classrooms)
- After school care is available until 5:30pm

Children's House

During this stage of development, children are learning about their world through their senses and exploration. The classrooms support the development of independence, confidence, and self-control and provide the foundation for academic success. While learning to function independently in the classroom environment, students also learn to coexist in a peaceful community.

At this age, children love to repeat activities that are interesting to them. They are driven to refine the skills they need to meet their needs independently. Students begin their Children's House years with a strong desire to create order that leads them to invest their time in practical life and sensorial activities. This work is satisfying in its own right but is also laying important foundations for language and math. While working with beautiful materials, students develop remarkable concentration, fine motor skills, and a rich vocabulary.

- Open to children from 32 months to 6 years of age (Kindergarten year)
- Half-day (12:00 pick up) or full-day (3:30 pm pick up) programs available
- After-school care is available until 5:30pm
- Year-round enrollment is available



Elementary

From six to 12 years, children are highly attuned to a wider world than what they knew in early childhood. With increasing interest in the social environment, children work in small groups to explore large concepts in pursuit of reasons, connections and patterns. In this learning environment, each child progresses at their own rate and is challenged with the opportunity to practice time management in the classroom.

The Montessori elementary curriculum is rich and interdisciplinary, connecting many subject areas into a vast network of interrelated information. With compelling stories, engaging materials, and individualized pacing and instruction, faculty members appeal to the students' imaginations and spark curiosity.

- Individualized curriculum plan and project-based learning
- Focus on mastery and ownership of learning
- Multi-age classrooms facilitate learning and leadership skills

Middle School

The Montessori program for middle school continues to support the development of the whole child during the phase of rapid growth and intense change that occurs between ages 12 and 15. Students appreciate intellectual challenge and meaningful work through which they can consider their place in society. With opportunities for both independence and community, they grow as adaptable members of a team and begin to create a vision for their personal future.

At Mountaintop, middle school students gain self-confidence and self-knowledge that are not often found among this age group in other settings.

- Authentic Montessori mixed-age middle school program
- Opportunities for independent work and self-expression
- Overnight field trips and opportunities for community service
- Participation in leadership programs on campus and internships in the larger community
- Outstanding performance on standardized tests
- Successful placement in a variety of local high schools, both public and private



CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Visual Arts Program

The Visual Arts program offers unique instruction that values process above product. Students receive lessons in art history and on a variety of mediums, including drawing, painting, ceramics, sculpture, and architecture. They have ample time in the art studio to explore the medium of their choice using high quality materials. Students are encouraged to find artistic inspiration from the surrounding world.

Music, Dance, Drama Program

The Music, Dance, Drama program at Mountaintop is rooted in Orff-Schulwerk, an approach to building musicianship in every learner through the integration of music, movement, speech, and drama.

Younger children experience music in the classroom with weekly visits from the music guide. Elementary students receive group lessons and have open studio time to create and collaborate. Middle school students participate in creative expression workshops on topics that include an annual play, dance instruction, instrumental ensembles, and composition. Students present their work at three large performances during the year.

Garden to Table Program

The Garden to Table program works in conjunction with the Ecology and Permaculture programs to allow children to see the complete food cycle from seed to table. Each week, elementary and middle school students join the chef in harvesting and preparing lunch for their classmates in the professional kitchen. Children are encouraged to try new foods as they prepare a wide variety of ethnic and regional dishes.

Ecology Program

Students at Mountaintop engage in the Ecology Program beginning in kindergarten. The program creates opportunities for children to develop strong connections and competency within the living ecosystem. Students explore biology and botany through sensory experiences, food production, and observation. They practice environmental stewardship in the gardens, chicken coop, fruit orchard, and natural environment.





Through their ecology lessons, students learn self-sufficiency, herbalism and wildcrafting, natural health and wellness, and the investigative process. As students progress through the program, they are challenged to apply their knowledge to current environmental issues, personal passions, and community service projects.

Physical Education

Students at Mountaintop have ample opportunity for movement through both spontaneous and organized sports activities. The approach makes physical fitness accessible to all children and emphasizes skill development, fitness, and sportsmanship. Children learn to celebrate their own achievements, as well as the accomplishments of their peers.

Spanish

Students work with a Spanish Specialist from the Elementary level through middle school. In the early years, conversation and an appreciation for the culture are emphasized. As children advance, the curriculum becomes more academic and culminates with the completion of either high school-level Spanish I or II. Spanish instruction is tailored to each developmental level and takes advantage of the young child's ability to absorb language.

Technology

Upper elementary and middle school students receive lessons in technology to improve their practical skills, digital citizenship, and internet safety. They also make use of technology for creative purposes such as design and video production.

CAMPUS

Campus

The campus is a 9-acre classroom. Students' work includes gardening, animal care, and maintaining the wildlife habitat.

Greenhouse

The 850 square foot geodesic Growing Dome has beds for growing produce as well as a 2300 gallon aquaculture tank.

Garden

The expansive Big Garden is home to a wide variety of fruits and veggies for students to tend, harvest and enjoy. The adjacent chicken coop provides eggs, a place to recycle kitchen scraps, and just plain fun.

Places to Play

Mountaintop's natural play spaces, soccer field, basketball court, gym and playgrounds provide students with lots of options for finding fun with friends during breaks from the garden and kitchen.





LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Mountaintop Montessori School seeks a dedicated, collaborative, and inspiring Head of School to lead the community and build upon the successes of the former Head of School, who was a deeply committed Montessorian and who modeled the Montessori philosophy in every aspect of school management.

The next leader must possess professional experience and personal qualities that align with the school culture and must demonstrate the following:

Qualifications and Attributes

- Experience in and deep understanding of Montessori education
- A commitment to building leadership capacity and delegating responsibility throughout the school community
- Experience in identifying and recruiting high-quality faculty and staff and investing in their personal and professional growth
- Modeling of high professional standards and the ability to hold others accountable
- The ability to work with the Board in strategically considering the long-term future of the school
- Experience in enrollment management focused on the recruitment and retention of students
- Deep commitment to adhering to Mountaintop's non-discrimination policy and fostering an inclusive environment for all
- An understanding of the value of engaging parents as partners in the education of their children
- Financial acumen and experience in fundraising
- An understanding of the value of data-informed decision making

Personal Attributes and Leadership Style

- Honest and trustworthy with strong personal integrity
- Present, approachable, and responsive
- A deep interest in investing in the growth of others
- An active listener
- A relationship builder
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- A collaborative leadership style
- The ability to work productively through conflict and build consensus



SUMMARY OF THE SEARCH PROCESS

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials in a single merged pdf file to Mary Seppala or Debbie Millon as soon as possible. Dossiers will be reviewed upon receipt.

- EC Summary Sheet (Contact Mary Seppala or Debbie Millon for this document)
- Letter of Interest addressed to the Search Committee
- Current Résumé
- Statement of Educational Leadership Philosophy
- A list of five or more professional references with contact information (name, relationship to candidate, phone and email address)
- Disclosure Statement (Contact Mary Seppala or Debbie Millon for this document)

Send application materials via email to:

Debbie Millon, Educators Collaborative

Email: dmillon@educatorscollaborative.com

Mary Seppala, Educators Collaborative

Email: mseppala@educatorscollaborative.com



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