

# Lakeland Montessori Schools

Lakeland Montessori Schoolhouse, Inc.

Montessori Middle School, Inc.

## A School Blueprint of Our Fundamental Values and Beliefs

*The school's mission, institutional identity, and core values and beliefs are set down in writing in a working community document called the "School Blueprint."*

### ***Lakeland Montessori Schoolhouse Mission Statement***

The mission of Lakeland Montessori Schoolhouse is to provide an enriched academic environment that also emphasizes the development of character, particularly the virtues of **respect, responsibility, and resourcefulness**.

#### **Respectful, Responsible, Resourceful**

Children are encouraged to become **respectful** by being in an environment where children of mixed ages, abilities, and backgrounds work together: where adults model respectful behavior and where the manners and courtesies of our cultures are presented and practiced.

Children become **responsible** by caring for themselves, their environment, and their community and by experiencing the results of their choices.

Children become **resourceful** by directing the course of their own day, making decisions, and solving problems as they arise.

### ***Montessori Middle School Mission Statement***

Montessori Middle School provides students with a holistic, developmentally responsive Montessori environment that allows for individual expression and encourages growth into active, responsible participants in society.

## *1. Educational Program at Lakeland Montessori Schools*

1.1. The Montessori approach to learning is the framework of our educational program.

1.1.1. We understand that the Montessori educational methods and materials are a logical system based on fundamental principles, not a rigid system. We are committed to applying the words, wisdom, and practical advice of the Montessori educational method as the lens through which we select, design, and evaluate our program and curriculum.

1.1.1.1. We will reference the Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public School Sector as the criteria for the definition of authentic Montessori programs (Appendix A).  
<http://www.public-montessori.org/resources/essential-elements-successful-montessori-schools-public-school-sector>

1.1.2. The nature of children and the learning process

1.1.2.1. We affirm that education begins at birth and continues throughout life.

1.1.2.2. We believe that, while people may be born with special gifts, one's experience, attitude, and diligent effort define much of what we call giftedness. Intelligence and talent are not rare among human beings, nor are they fixed at birth. We do not accept the bell curve prediction of aptitude and intelligence to be an accurate portrayal of what children can achieve with the right stimulation and support.

1.1.2.3. We believe that people have the intelligence and natural ability required to learn everything they need to lead happy and productive lives.

1.1.2.4. Wisdom is the ability to discern, judge, and act upon what is true, right, or lasting. We affirm that wisdom can be cultivated. In order to achieve this goal of cultivating wisdom, we must value self-esteem, human dignity, and emotional well-being, as well as the ability to understand, communicate, and cooperate effectively with others as highly as academic and outward material success.

1.1.3. We approach learning by seeking to understand and respect our students' unique individual personalities, learning styles, and interests. We guide them through our curriculum at diverse rates of learning, designing our program to accommodate a wide range of individual differences.

1.1.4. We strive to cultivate in our students an innate love of learning, a wide range of interests, and an openness to new ideas and possibilities.

1.1.5. We teach our students to learn from their mistakes and those of others. We encourage them to learn from both success and failure, to take developmentally appropriate risks, and to accept the outcomes as nonthreatening feedback on their progress and personal growth.

1.1.6. We nurture our students' emotional well-being and self-confidence, recognizing the link between their sense of self and the fulfillment of their academic potential.

1.1.7. We encourage children to celebrate life, focus on the positive, and develop the spiritual side of their lives according to their individual beliefs.

1.1.8. We seek to help our students understand and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

1.1.9. Our educational approach is centered around the stages of human development.

1.1.9.1. Our faculty members engage in an ongoing study of child development. They keep abreast of current research on brain development, observe students daily, and evaluate our curriculum and programs on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate.

1.1.9.2. We strive to design and adapt our classroom programs to meet our students' varied stages of developmental needs and abilities.

1.1.9.3. We establish and follow an individualized educational curricular framework of basic academic achievement, leading each student to the next stage of development.

1.1.9.4. Although our program is designed to allow children to learn at diverse rates and explore areas of personal interest, we have also established Montessori key benchmarks that we expect most children will meet by specific age levels.

1.1.10. We promote active, rather than passive, learning.

1.1.10.1. We promote spontaneous, self-initiated learning by encouraging students to explore their personal interests.

1.1.10.2. We use hands-on, "experiential" learning whenever possible, rather than lecture and drill. We use, for example, concrete manipulative learning materials, experimental discovery, seminar discussions,

independent library research, field investigation, and computer simulation.

1.1.11. We facilitate the transition from concrete learning to abstract reasoning and practical application.

1.1.12. One of our goals is to help children develop a sense of order and become self-motivated. As necessary, we provide individual students with just enough external structure and support to help them successfully develop an inner sense of order for themselves.

1.1.13. We strive for a balance between freedom, order, and responsibility.

1.1.14. Although we seek to provide an environment open to students with diverse learning styles, our school will not be able to meet the needs of every child while maintaining the integrity of our educational program.

1.1.15. We nurture curiosity, creativity, and imagination.

1.1.16. We develop classroom designs that are compatible with Montessori “prepared environment” principles.

1.2. We are a globally minded school. We embrace a global perspective as a philosophy for building a diverse community, grounded in knowledge that leads to understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of all peoples.

1.2.1. We prepare students to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by an ever-growing global society that is integrated well beyond traditionally established cultural borders.

1.2.2. We celebrate diversity in our community and acknowledge the unique contributions of all individuals.

1.2.3. We seek to develop within our students a global perspective and international understanding, weaving globally minded education through our curriculum at every age level, through:

1.2.3.1. the study of physical, cultural, and economic geography

1.2.3.2. correspondence with other schools—Montessori and otherwise—around the world

1.2.3.3. encouraging families and community members to share their cultural traditions, travel experiences, and traditional festivals

1.2.3.4. incorporating an ongoing experiential program of global cultural education

1.3. We prepare students for **continuing education, career, and life.**

1.3.1. We expect our students to be well educated in the core academic disciplines.

1.3.2. At all levels, we consistently emphasize the importance of careful work and pride in accomplishment.

1.3.3. Competition: We believe that it is neither necessary, nor appropriate, to encourage unrestrained academic competition among students as a means of motivating them to learn.

1.3.3.1. We are not opposed to competition. We simply believe that a spirit of friendly competition should come from the children themselves.

1.3.3.2. We cultivate each student's ability to accept success with grace and disappointment with dignity, and we resolve to build on those experiences.

1.3.3.3. We ensure our students' right to choose whether to participate in competitive activities.

1.3.3.4. We stress the principles of good sportsmanship.

1.3.4. Success: We design our educational program to maximize each student's academic and personal success. We strive to encourage students to build on their strengths and personal learning styles and to learn from their mistakes.

1.3.4.1. Academic Success: We encourage skills that support successful independent and collaborative learning, critical thinking, projects, reflective reading, problem solving, library research, use of technology, techniques for effective study, test-taking strategies, and techniques for focusing attention.

1.3.4.2. Personal Success: We consider it equally important for our students to be successful human beings who can establish healthy relationships and to achieve happiness in their personal lives.

1.3.4.2.1. We help our students learn to pay attention to and respect feelings and opinions—both their own and those of others.

1.3.4.2.2. We help our students learn to resolve conflicts effectively and fairly and to express their feelings and opinions in a healthy manner.

1.3.4.2.3. We help our students learn both interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills so they can navigate group dynamics.

1.3.5. Curriculum: We believe that an effective curriculum touches on and weaves together many areas of education. The great lessons are foundational to our curriculum as they integrate many essential topics that flow through our early childhood, elementary, and secondary programs. Our curriculum is not driven by the use of textbooks.

1.3.5.1. Cosmic Studies: Dr. Maria Montessori developed an approach of introducing curriculum as major topics about our world in such a way as to inspire a sense of wonder and to ignite a young child's imagination.

These are the five Great Lessons:

- The Story of the Beginning of the Universe
- The Coming of Life
- The Story of Humans
- The Story of Language
- The Story of Numbers

1.3.5.2. Language, Literature, and Communication: We teach students to read and write with facility. We create an environment that is conducive to a lifetime enjoyment of reading and writing. We explore various forms of human communication. Recognizing that we live in a time when the various forms of mass media have a profound impact on our lives, we develop in each student the ability to understand and filter this influence. We also believe that by developing a student's ability to use these forms of communication, we strengthen self-confidence and enhance the ability to convey thoughts and feelings more effectively.

1.3.5.3. Research Skills: We teach our students the skills of investigation and research using the library, Internet, public records, interviews, and primary and secondary source materials. We seek to have our students learn how to organize the information that they compile into increasingly sophisticated reports and presentations.

1.3.5.4. Mathematics: Our mathematics curriculum is consciously integrated, incorporating many areas, including arithmetic, geometry, measurement, statistics, probability, logic, algebra, trigonometry, and calculus. Whenever possible, we help students grasp the underlying concepts of math through the use of concrete apparatus and through application of mathematics to real-world tasks and problem solving.

1.3.5.5. Science: We guide students not only toward scientific facts but the process, history, and true nature of science. We want them to

understand that science is not just the subjects that scientists study, such as the nature of atoms, but the process of studying the world, with the goal of arriving at conclusions about reliable information regarding what is probably true and what is probably not. Our curriculum consciously integrates topics from botany, zoology, physical science, machines and technology, astronomy, geology, Earth and environmental science, weather, and the medical sciences.

1.3.5.6. Economics: Economics is a constant basic element of our world. While money is not the most important thing in our lives, the stress that follows a lack of sufficient money to pay one's bills can have negative impacts. Our goal is for our students to both understand the principles of economic freedom and to feel comfortable with personal financial decisions and business matters. We aim to give students an understanding of the barter system, the value of money over time, international trade, and basic concepts of small businesses (the adolescent students run at least one business). We encourage our students to develop an entrepreneurial spirit, whether or not they one day choose to run their own businesses.

1.3.5.7. Geography: We want our students to develop a global perspective and an international understanding by guiding them in in-depth studies of world geography (physical, cultural, political, and economic).

1.3.5.8. History: We develop a strong historical perspective through the study of prehistory and history, following an anthropological orientation into fundamental needs of humankind and the cultures, lifestyles, and technology of the past. We cultivate an appreciation of family and community heritage. History sets the stage for integrated learning at every level of our schools.

1.3.5.9. Anthropology and Mythology: We teach students the basic elements of anthropology, addressing the question of what makes us human, the nature of culture, and how cultures have attempted to explain or illuminate the great questions of life through myth and other story as well as cultural archetypes.

1.3.5.10. Human Spirituality: We believe that our students should be familiar with and respect the traditions and basic beliefs of the world's major religions. While we do not teach religion, nor advocate any particular belief system, we encourage students to explore theological, philosophical, and spiritual questions and develop the spiritual side of their lives.

1.3.5.11. Architecture: We believe our students should understand how

buildings are constructed and designed and that they should develop an appreciation for the timeless beauty of well-designed spaces. We also want to help them to understand and appreciate the importance of more sustainable building design.

1.3.5.12. Civics and Law: We believe that our students should understand how government works at the local, state, and national levels. Equally, students need to understand the role that they can play as citizens in shaping consensus, advocating their point of view, and making informed decisions before they vote. They should also understand how the legal system works and have an informed working knowledge of and respect for the law. Our goal is to lead young men and women to be informed about current issues and to play an active and responsible role as citizens of our nation and the world.

1.3.5.13. Visual and Performing Arts: Our program is conducive to fostering an appreciation of art, music, and drama by integrating artistic and creative experiences and expression with academic curriculum, including learning about great works created throughout time.

1.3.5.14. Physical Education, Health, and Athletics: We encourage our students to understand, appreciate, and adopt healthy lifestyles that include exercise, healthful diet, and intelligent choices regarding personal health. We encourage student interest in sports and other activities that can be enjoyed for a lifetime. We appreciate the value of team sports and the contribution that participation in them can make in our students' lives.

1.3.5.15. Peace Education: Human relations and conflict resolution skills, nonviolence, leadership training, cooperative teamwork skills, and communication skills are all important elements in nurturing our students. Peace education is as significant as any other curriculum area. It may also include other broad themes in human history, such as the structure of human organizations that are based on principles of partnership in contrast to those of domination, the history of oppressed people gaining rights and new roles, and social justice.

1.3.5.16. Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills: Woven into the tapestry of all the curriculum areas is the ability to be innovative: to think outside the box and to develop solutions that work well for ourselves and others.

1.3.5.17 Service Learning: The integration of service learning encourages students to be caretakers of their community. We believe that service learning provides authentic, relevant learning experiences for our students, allowing them to see how academic subjects are applicable to

their lives and the lives of others. Such projects are conceived of and researched in the school community, enacted within the larger community, and evaluated for effectiveness.

1.3.5.18. Community Service: We believe that the less fortunate members of society are no less deserving than others. We strive to help our students understand that the freedom and education they receive at Lakeland Montessori Schools comes with the responsibility to help others in the community. We want our students to understand that we are all responsible for changing the world for the better and that service needs to be part of everyone's life if we are to achieve this goal. Opportunities to perform community service, both locally and globally, might include sharing clothes and toys with children who cannot afford them or volunteering at nursing homes, soup kitchens, and hospitals.

1.3.5.19. Practical Life: To facilitate and encourage a sense of independence, we deliberately teach a wide range of practical life skills appropriate to each child's level of development, including care of one's environment and grace and courtesy. We regard this as a vital element affecting the design of our entire curriculum.

1.3.5.20. Communication: We teach students appropriate use of various methods for personal and mass communication—from writing letters to using the telephone, using a word processor, preparing a newsletter, speaking before an audience, and designing audiovisual presentations.

1.3.5.21. Transportation: As appropriate at each age level, we encourage the safe use of transportation alternatives to a parent's car, such as hiking and bicycling, public transportation, and personal transport.

1.3.5.22. Time Management, Organization, and Productivity: We strive to prepare students for the multifaceted demands of continuing education, career and life through the development of time management, organizational, and productivity skills and strategies.

1.3.5.23. Natural World: We strive to help children understand, appreciate, develop stewardship of, and feel at home in the natural world. *"The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth."*—Maria Montessori

1.3.5.23.1. We seek to instill in our students, parents, and staff not only a reverence for Earth, its waters, and all living things, but also a sense of stewardship for the environment based on a conviction of our individual responsibility for the beauty of the land and the health of our ecosystems.

1.3.5.23.2. We believe that being at home in the world of nature is a fundamental part of being a whole and healthy human being.

1.3.5.23.3. We consciously work to foster in each student a strong sense of belonging to the web of life through programs at every age, including outdoor education, field biology, gardening, small animal care, camping, canoeing, field ecological studies in natural wilderness settings, and use of recycling and environmentally friendly packaging. We take advantage of the natural setting of our campus and the wide variety of natural resources available locally and in other places.

1.3.6. Academic Standards: We set our expectations high but do not ask individuals to do more than they are capable of doing. We consistently stress at all levels the importance of careful work and pride in accomplishment. The reward is not in the quantity of work achieved but the satisfaction of work done well for its own sake. We carefully build a supportive environment for students to move steadily toward the pursuit of excellence with an unhurried mind.

1.3.7. Assessment: We believe that both formative and summative assessments are powerful indicators of the effectiveness and progress of our students (and also our staff, leadership, and school). We use many forms of student assessment throughout the year, including standardized testing, teacher observations, student work samples, and surveys. We believe that the use of diverse assessments gives us access to information we need to ensure an equitable, high-quality education for every child.

1.3.8. Technology: We believe that the developmentally appropriate integration of technology tools in a prepared environment can support the formation of our students' productivity and citizenship in the modern world. Technological devices, such as classroom audio-visual equipment, computers, and scientific tools, can expand learning opportunities and enhance the development of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Moreover, we believe that applications of digital technologies can enhance individualized, constructive, authentic and globally-minded learning in the Montessori environment.

1.3.9. We make a concerted effort to empower students at our school to help them learn how to make responsible choices for themselves, assume increasing control over their lives as they mature, and discover how to make a difference in the world around them through their positive efforts and contributions to others.

1.3.10. Our goals for students include developing open-mindedness and compassion, gaining a sense of themselves and others, and understanding and appreciating the diversity of the human spirit.

1.3.11. To facilitate the development of independence and a sense of engagement with the community, we strongly encourage participation in day-to-day classroom management, care of the environment, and decision making. We seek to help each student see the value of commitment both to the school community and to the community at large.

1.3.12. We want students to love learning and to value knowledge, creativity, and humor.

1.3.13. We encourage our students to be responsible, critical, and caring members of a pluralistic society and to recognize that they have the power and resources to affect change and to pursue their goals.

1.3.14. We respect the fundamental human needs, rights, and dignity of each person, at any age, as a full and independent person who is engaged in the ongoing process of development. We model and encourage basic values such as kindness, honesty, warmth and openness, respect for each person's uniqueness, tolerance, cooperation, good sportsmanship, and nonviolence.

1.3.15. Both with our children and with each other, we model and encourage acceptance of differences in culture, race, and beliefs. Likewise, we model respect for people who are different from us in ability, thought, and ways of doing things, as well as in their dress and physical appearance. Together with self-confidence, this acceptance and respect enable our children to avoid being threatened by or judgmental of superficial differences between people.

1.4. Discipline: Ultimately our goal is for students to willingly take personal responsibility for their actions, attitudes, and experience. Taking personal responsibility brings our students great rewards such as the freedom to choose and create the type of person they wish to be and the life they wish to lead.

1.4.1. In keeping with the true meaning of the word *discipline*, which is "to teach," we model and encourage appropriate, kind, and considerate ways to act in various situations.

1.4.2. School should be safe. We cultivate a school environment that promotes and protects the physical and emotional well-being of our students and staff.

1.4.3. We guide students, before situations occur, in kind and considerate ways to act kindly and appropriately in any given situation. We present rules and their natural and logical consequences, and we use positive feedback to encourage progress, acknowledge contributions, and strengthen character.

1.4.4. As necessary, we cue and remind students of appropriate behaviors before they forget. When actions are inappropriate and a gentle reminder isn't enough,

we intervene and respectfully, but firmly, stop the behavior.

1.4.5. We do not permit the use of corporal punishment, external threat, humiliation, punishment, or rewards.

1.4.6. We encourage and model ways to negotiate in conflict situations so that, whenever possible, everyone feels heard and that each person's feelings and needs are respected.

1.4.7. We encourage self-discipline and self-motivation, rather than extrinsic rewards, to influence students' actions.

1.4.8. We recognize that some of the students' actions communicate a desire for attention, power, or to express emotions such as anger, frustration, or discouragement. We therefore do not label children who misbehave as "bad" but stop inappropriate behavior, encourage personal responsibility for actions, seek to understand the root cause of the behavior, and encourage more appropriate methods of communication and interaction.

1.4.9. When it becomes evident that a child is struggling to thrive in our Montessori environment, we initiate collaborative efforts to seek resources, both internal and external, to determine ways to more fully meet the needs of that child.

1.4.10. While we are normally successful with a very wide range of students, our school is not able to meet the needs of every child. One of our greatest challenges is to be objective and compassionate yet realistic in considering the needs of each child and our ability to meet his or her needs. When, despite our best efforts, we fail to help a student meet appropriate behavioral expectations set down within the school's ground rules, we counsel the family with kindness and support to seek out another school setting in which the child can experience success.

## 2. Faculty

2.1. We carefully identify the duties and responsibilities of each position in the school.

2.2. We carefully identify the skills and knowledge, experience, educational philosophy, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, and core values needed to be successful in each position at our school.

2.3. We take great care in our hiring process to find new members of our faculty and staff who bring an appropriate mix of skills, knowledge, experience, values, and personality to succeed at our school.

2.4. All lead classroom guides must hold or be enrolled to receive their Montessori credentials issued by a Montessori teacher education program that is accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) for the age levels they are teaching. Separate, specific Montessori credentials are required for ages 3–6, ages 6–9, ages 9–12, and ages 12–15. For example, a teacher who is Montessori certified for ages 3–6 may not teach ages 9-12 students unless he or she holds or is enrolled to receive the Montessori credential for that age level.

2.5. We clearly communicate to all members of the faculty and staff our expectations, human resources policies, and benefits and professional development opportunities that may be applicable to their positions.

2.6. We take proactive measures to retain our staff by creating a positive working environment where all members of our faculty and staff feel supported, appreciated, and considered. We also offer retention incentives, such as Montessori training tuition assistance, Montessori conference attendance costs, enrollment preference for their children, and reduced-cost after-school care for their children.

2.7. In evaluating the school's programs and the performance of each member of the faculty, we are as objective and positive as possible, encouraging individual initiative, self-evaluation, and continuous professional growth.

2.8. We consciously follow fair and equal employment practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, and compensating both teaching and nonteaching staff members. We endeavor to employ persons solely on the basis of the factors necessary in the performance of the job and the operation of our school, without discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, race, national origin, gender, and any other factor on which discrimination is prohibited by the laws of the jurisdiction within which our schools are located.

2.9. No official of our school may seek to entice a teacher who is under contract at another school to break that contract. However, a member of the teaching or administrative staff of another school may independently approach one of our schools about possible employment.

2.10. Our school may not offer employment to a member of the faculty or staff of another school without communicating with the head of that school and the employer at which he or she is presently employed or committed for the upcoming school year to request a frank evaluation of a candidate's qualifications. This information will be considered absolutely confidential.

2.11. Our school takes all reasonable and lawful precautions to maintain the confidentiality of records and information concerning teachers and other staff members who are applying for employment at another school, in accordance with the rights of the individual.

### 3. Facilities

3.1. We deliberately seek to create lovely campuses that communicate to our students that the buildings and grounds are expressions of our love and commitment to their education and success.

3.2. Whatever the size of our enrollment, or the age levels encompassed in our programs, our buildings and grounds support the implementation of our educational program and institutional mission as ideally as possible.

3.3. Buildings will not be constructed solely for the sake of having space. Consistent with this school Blueprint, each decision for our master plan will be carefully considered in terms of need, ideal space, configuration, and visual harmony that fosters the prepared environment.

3.4. We set a high priority on our campuses having access to natural habitats as well as areas for gardening and outdoor education.

3.5. The schools consciously follow safety procedures designed to protect students and staff.

### 4. Finances

4.1. Our school honors its financial commitments.

4.2. We strive to always operate on a balanced budget.

4.2.1. We are committed to maintaining a contingency/reserve fund.

4.2.2. We work to maintain a balanced operating budget without depending on income from fundraising projects.

4.3. We communicate accurate information about the financial state of the school in an annual report to the community and, from time to time, on a more frequent basis.

4.4. We expect all of our families, staff, and board members, as members of our community, to honor their financial obligations to the school in a timely and responsible manner.

### 5. Recruitment and Admissions

5.1. Our schools are just as focused on creating a strong sense of community and retaining current students as it is on finding new students who will benefit from a fine Montessori education.

5.2. Our primary goal in the admissions and recruitment process is to find families for whom the school will be a compatible match. We seek families who share common values and goals with the schools, and who, after careful consideration and exploration, have concluded that our schools are something that they want very much for their children. In the recruitment and admissions process, we seek to help each family determine whether our schools are a compatible match with their values and goals and whether the school setting will work well for their individual child.

5.3. In making admissions decisions regarding 3- and 4-year-olds, we give strong preference to families we believe are committed to keeping their children in the school through eighth grade.

5.4. We want to be a family tradition. Ideally, Lakeland Montessori Schools will be so much a part of each family's life that eventually the children of our alumni will attend our school as well.

5.5. In the admissions process, we consciously treat parents with respect as partners in exploring whether we would be a compatible match for their child.

5.6. We do not try to "sell" parents of prospective students on the idea that our schools are right for them and for their child. Instead, we attempt to help them grasp the true nature of the schools and what they have to offer, and we allow them to weigh all the factors as they consider whether our schools are indeed a compatible match for them and their child.

5.7. We create a list of the names and phone numbers of willing ambassador parents and make this list available to parents of prospective students who would like to speak with another family.

5.8. We arrange frequent and convenient times when parents of prospective students can observe and tour our classrooms.

5.9. We spend as much time with parents of prospective students as possible in order to answer their questions, address their concerns, and assist them in determining whether it feels to them as if our school would be a good match for their child.

5.10. We do our best once we receive an application to gather all the information needed to evaluate the application and schedule all meetings in the most timely manner possible. We endeavor to make and communicate all admissions decisions to families as quickly as possible.

5.11. Our schools do not discriminate in matters of admission on the basis of race, creed, religion, national or ethnic background origin. We consciously teach children to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the global community. We regard a mix of

backgrounds and abilities as a positive and important element in our community.

5.12. We represent our school truthfully and accurately to the general public and internally to our parent community.

5.13. We promptly consult with parents if it becomes clear that a student is not benefiting from our schools' programs or if the schools do not offer the best program to meet the student's needs.

5.14. While we welcome inquiries and interest in our school, we do not knowingly attempt to recruit or enroll an individual student away from his or her current Montessori program or who is committed to attend another Montessori program.

## 6. Building the School Community

6.1. We cultivate a close-knit community of students, educators, parents, and friends of the school.

6.2. We recognize that a Montessori school is more than a place of learning; it is a community of children and adults that has a significant impact on our students' capacity to learn, grow, create, develop, assimilate values, and relate peacefully and respectfully to other people and to the natural world. We are an extended family community whose participants are supported at all levels by all others in the community.

6.3. We treat all students, families, teachers, staff members, and all other people with kindness, warmth, and respect.

6.4. Within reasonable guidelines established to ensure the integrity of our educational program and the privacy of other students' records, parents are welcome to visit the school to observe their children in class or to review their academic progress.

6.5. We place a strong emphasis on building constructive relationships and partnerships with families as early as possible in order to help parents recognize the uniqueness of their child, support their child's development, and support parents' ability to incorporate Montessori philosophy into their family life.

6.6. We consider input from school community members in our decision-making processes.

6.7. Commitment to the Values of the School: We expect all adult members of the school community to treat one another and the children in accordance with the core values of the school, as embodied in this document.

6.8. We value service and volunteerism from parents of our students. Parental involvement in service to the schools builds and strengthens our community and models

our value of community service for students. In addition, parents of our students bring a rich assortment of talents and knowledge to our school.

6.9. Volunteering: Lakeland Montessori Schools believe that the schools' partnerships with families is a key to student success and to the success of the overall program and will help determine to what degree performance standards will be attained. Enrollment is a parent/student cooperative choice, wherein parents/guardians contractually agree to be responsible for their child's abiding by the rules and regulations applicable to attendance, classroom participation, and behavior. Each family is required to volunteer at least 20 hours per year for the schools in a capacity that is sensitive to the needs of the schools. In order for a student to be automatically re-enrolled for the following school year, all hours must be completed by the last school day of the school year.

6.10. Parenting: We encourage families to participate in programs that can help them refine their parenting strategies and facilitate the development of independence, responsibility, self-confidence, and self-respect in their sons and daughters and in themselves. We are committed to finding ways to provide support for families.

6.11. Buddy Parent Program: We understand the special needs of new participants in the school community and the necessity of a program to match new families with ones experienced in the school community to provide support and information.

6.12. Partnerships with Community Businesses and Organizations: We encourage and facilitate partnerships with community businesses and organizations. Such partnerships can provide incredible resources and experiences for our students, such as service learning, field trips, and guest speaker opportunities.

6.12.1. We are often involved with community businesses and organizations for fundraising activities, events, volunteering, service learning, and donation activities. We ensure that these businesses and organizations do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, or country of origin. We may give funds, time, and donations to religious or faith-based organizations or programs only if they support a program that does not require that beneficiaries participate in religious activities in order to benefit from the service or material. In addition, our funds, time, and/or donations should not be given for religious holidays or activities.

6.13. Class and School Community Meetings: We believe in holding periodic class and school community meetings outside of the school day to allow and encourage an open exchange of ideas and information in order to support the program goals of the school. Students are often welcome to participate.

6.14. We are committed to being family-friendly schools.

6.14.1. In establishing policies and procedures, we attempt to remain sensitive to the needs, desires, and factors that might add unnecessary stress and pressures to our families.

6.14.2. In establishing policies and procedures, along with setting the calendar of school events, we attempt to avoid conflicting with the religious traditions and holy days of our families. We recognize that this at times may be virtually impossible, considering our diversity, but at the very least, we strive to create a balanced and respectful approach to this issue.

6.14.3. In policy and procedures, we strive to support both traditional and nontraditional families, seeking to ensure that one and all feel honored and welcomed in the school community.

6.14.4. When we can, we plan optional programs designed to offer support to our families while often enhancing our educational programs.

6.14.5. From time to time, we survey our families or hold special community meetings to explore how the school could be more family friendly.

## 7. Administration

7.1. Our administration provides both educational leadership and business administration.

7.2. The administration ensures that excellence and consistency with our values and vision permeate the schools seamlessly from class to class, from level to level, and from one year to the next.

7.3. The administration supports the faculty and school community; however, the ultimate factor on which difficult decisions must be balanced is what is best for each individual child and what is consistent with the core values of the schools.

7.4. When conflicts arise within the school, whether they involve parents, staff members, students, administrators, or board members, we attempt to find a resolution of the issues under dispute that is consistent with the schools' fundamental values and that is a win-win situation.

7.5. The administration of the school ensures a smooth and timely flow of communication about important dates and information to parents, students, and staff, and board members.

7.6. The administration follows a collegial model in working with faculty members and staff, inviting their input and participation whenever appropriate in important questions facing the school.

## 8. Governance

8.1. Governing board members share a deep sense of commitment to both our schools and Montessori education. In all matters, they consider the overall best interests of the schools over their own interests or over the interests of any constituent group within the school community.

8.2. The primary responsibility of the governing board is to ensure the financial and academic health of the schools, in accordance with our values and vision.

8.3. Before beginning to consider voting on any motion made before the board, the governing board first consults the school Blueprint to identify the underlying values and beliefs that would support whatever decision is made on the issue in question. Unless inconsistent with the law, the board will not approve motions that are in conflict with core values and beliefs that are consistent with the school Blueprint.

8.4. Before amending the school Blueprint, the board formally requests that the school community review the proposed amendment and provide feedback.

8.5. The minutes of the meetings of the board reflect the motions passed, with citation of the section number of the underlying elements of the school Blueprint that supports the action.

## 9. Fundraising

9.1. Every gift given to our schools is a gift of love, generously offered in support of our work.

9.2. We limit school fundraising activities to major programs, such as an annual fund or a spring benefit. Student businesses are not considered fundraisers.

9.3. While donations of funds, tangible goods, services, or real property are deeply appreciated, the schools cannot accept any gift that would require it to violate any of its core beliefs, outlined in this document.

9.3.1. While individuals wishing to donate funds, real property, and tangible goods to the schools are welcome to designate the use to which they may be put, it is up the governing board to establish policy about who will decide on behalf of the school whether those funds can be accepted in light of the conditions established.

9.3.2. Only the governing board can accept on behalf of the schools a gift of funds, real property, or tangible goods that would potentially require the expenditure of funds.

9.4. The governing board should be a key element in leading and promoting the school's fundraising efforts.