

Freeway Application

I. Identify the School Entity to Be Declared A Freeway School.

This Freeway application is made by North Star Montessori (Non-Public School Number 365 A405), 2320 Midway Street, Columbus, IN 47201. The school currently serves first through 6th grades.

II. Identify the Demographic Data of the School and the Community That It Serves.

North Star Montessori serves a population of 20 students in 1st through 6th grades currently. North Star 88.9% Caucasian, 5.6% Hispanic, 5.6% Multiracial, 88.9% free meals, 11.1% reduced price meal.

III. Describe How the School's Curriculum Will Comply with the Common Core Standards Adopted by the State of Indiana.

The primary objective of a Montessori-based curriculum and of the Common Core is the education of the whole child. Where the Common Core sets the bar for minimum competency, Montessori strives to create an individualized pathway to exceed expectations. Dr. Montessori believed that different age groups of children have different needs and skill sets, and by tapping into the natural imagination of the elementary child, Montessori teachers are able to capture the enthusiasm of their students and spark the drive to explore and thus learn. Dr. Montessori said,

“The secret of good teaching is to regard the children’s intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim therefore is not merely to make the children understand, and still less to force them to memorize, but so to touch their imagination as to enthuse them to their inmost core. We do not want complacent pupils but eager ones; we seek to sow life in children rather than theories, to help them in their growth, mental and emotional as well as physical.” (MM. To Educate the Human Potential)

Through the medium of story, all aspects of the curriculum are presented early in the Montessori curriculum, even geometry. For example, to introduce the use of measurement with a protractor, children learn about the ancient Sumerians and their observations of the movement of the stars. Children are presented with the whole, beginning with the universe and then each successive story carries the children further and further into detail. From each “great lesson”, as the five pivotal stories of the Montessori elementary curriculum are known, the child journeys into a world of physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, astrophysics, earth science, math and language. “These lessons present in turn the creation of the Earth, the beginning of life, the coming of humans, and the tools of human communication; language and mathematics. Children’s minds are not divided into categories. They operate as whole systems. Nor is the universe divided into subjects.” (Polk Lillard, 58) These great lessons then form the backbone of the Social Studies and Science curricula. Questions which may arise serve as a guiding frame for integrated, thematic studies, individual research projects, and service-learning activities.

In the Lower Elementary, Montessori curriculum provides an array of specially developed materials and methods. Socrates said, “There is nothing in the mind that is not first in the hands.” The touching and manipulation of these materials allow young children to build concepts from concrete models and experiences through self-directed activity and peer and teacher interaction. These core materials become less evident in the Upper Elementary as students begin to transition to symbolic and abstract conceptual understandings.

General Description of Curriculum by Subject Area:

- Mathematics, 1-6: Students use a range of Montessori materials to explore concepts extensively in concrete form before abstracting and integrating them. Montessori curriculum addresses many Mathematics objectives in the Indiana Curriculum. Number sense and computation, and geometry receive especially strong and effective emphasis.
- Language Arts, 1-6: The Montessori curriculum stresses the interrelatedness of reading and writing and promotes an integrated approach where reading and writing occur across the curriculum. Phonemic awareness, phonics, grammar, and vocabulary development are essential components of the curriculum, as well as developing fluency and comprehension skills. Writing application skills are integrated into the cultural curriculum with emphasis on expository techniques such as cause and effect, compare and contrast, sequencing, informational and descriptive writing.
- Foreign Language, 1-6: All students receive Spanish instruction on a weekly basis, through the medium of oral language games, songs, and activities and the use of Montessori Spanish materials. These materials identify the different parts of speech and basic sentence construction and grammar.
- Visual Arts, 1-6: Visual and performing arts are an integral part of the curriculum with art, music, and technology incorporated into other aspects of the curriculum. Students will be given direct instruction in specific techniques, and then given the opportunity to express themselves creatively in collaboration with another subject. For example, while learning to identify the different types of leaves, students can explore the color and repetition techniques of Andy Warhol. Computers with Internet access are available in every classroom for research and publishing purposes and the development of keyboarding skills. Educational software is also be available for the students to use as a supplement to their core curriculum.

The nature of Montessori philosophy is such that the interests of the child are pursued, so if one child finds an interest in geometry, once the state requirements are met, he/she is free to pursue the curriculum further.

- For example, a 4th grade child learns to identify the six basic types of angles (State Standard 4.4.1) using a box of sticks, which enables him/her to physically build and identify each specific angle with different length sticks, and then pin them to a specially designed board. Then, he/she learns to measure them, first with a Montessori protractor, and then a standard protractor. If he/she is interested, instruction can continue into the 6th grade standard of vertical, adjacent, supplementary, and complementary angles should the child wish. At no time, will other aspects of the child's learning be negatively impacted.

The school plans to train the majority of the staff in the Montessori approach, as well as ensuring that they are state licensed. Montessori training includes comprehensive instruction in the areas of math, language, biology, geography (political and functional), history, physics, and chemistry. During training, each of these subjects is carefully documented and sequenced into comprehensive lessons for each of the core-curriculum subjects within a series of albums. Our own review has confirmed that these Montessori lessons target many of the core learning objectives of the Indiana standards. Grade level content and skills will be taught in all these subject areas.

In addition, as the school transitions to Freeway status, a team of educators will work to merge the grades 1-6 Montessori Albums, Indiana State Standards, and North Star's learning objectives into a first draft of the Curriculum. Benchmark entries for grades 1-3 and 4-6 will be drafted to articulate criteria for acceptable demonstrations of learning for the school's objectives and to indicate readiness to matriculate to the next three-year cycle. Record-keeping systems will be used that will aid the alignment of the Montessori materials with state standards. The head of school and professional development coordinators will implement a professional development program that will create an environment where staff and students thrive both academically and socially.

IV. Describe The Plan Allowing Students To Earn An Indiana Academic Honors Diploma Where Applicable.

N/A

V. Freeway Accreditation Requires Educational Benefits for Students in the School's Attendance Rate, Student Performance on ISTEP+ and End of Course Assessments, and For High School's, An Improvement in Graduation Rates.

- **Describe the School's Strategies to Meet These Improvements In Performance.**
- **Describe Any Additional Measures That Will Be Used to Measure Student Achievement and Growth.**

North Star keeps record of attendance and communication with parents through Transparent Classroom.

At the beginning of the school year, all students will be assessed. Benchmark assessments will be taken of all students in the school three times a year; fall, winter and spring. These benchmark assessments will serve as general education progress monitoring and aid in measuring progress. The fall benchmark will serve as a baseline. All students will be assessed in the areas of reading comprehension, fluency, spelling, math fluency and math concept. Students that fall below the average, or 25th – 75th percentile, range will be considered at risk.

At-risk students will be strategically monitored monthly to determine the effectiveness of the implemented interventions. Students receiving intensive instructional services will be progress monitored as frequently as needed, sometimes as often as every week. The data will be displayed in the form of graphs which demonstrate the average achievement level and the achievement level of the student receiving interventions. The graph will indicate clearly if an implemented intervention is effective or not. If it is not effective after a school decided intervention time period, then the intervention will be modified.

After the first benchmark assessment has been scored. Each student according to their needs will have a plan strategically implemented.

Only evidence-based tools will be implemented. A set of charts will be created to ensure fidelity to the intervention. They will also identify who will be implementing the intervention, how often, and the number of times per week. At the end of each small group meeting, the administrator of the intervention will complete the necessary paperwork. Progress monitoring probes will be run every two weeks. After an agreed-on length of time, a graph will be created to ascertain whether the intervention is improving the students' academic performance sufficiently or not. If the students are performing at a level which

would bring them up to their peers' average performance level, then the intervention is working appropriately. If it is not, then the teachers will reconvene to decide which new intervention to implement. This will continue until all students are performing at an acceptable academic level.

If a student is in need of intensive interventions, a similar process to the one above will be implemented. This entails more interventions per week, and more frequent progress monitoring.

All interventions will take place in the general-education classroom and administered by one of the regular teachers.

ISTEP and IRead will be administered per DOE requirement and the results will be used to drive key student interventions, curricular decisions, and teacher professional development.

VI. Describe the Curriculum Strategies to Address: Character Education; Hygiene; Alcohol and Drugs; Diseases Transmitted Sexually; Honesty; Respect and Abstinence and Restraint.

- Health and Peace Education, 1-6: North Star is committed to the development of the whole child, in accordance with Montessori philosophy. Physical and health education is an integral part of curriculum, including hygiene, effects of alcohol and drugs, and when appropriate, STD's and abstinence and restraint.
- Students enjoy at least one period of unstructured outdoor activity daily through recess and specific instruction in physical education at least once a week. In the lower elementary classroom, students learn about the different body systems through use of materials within the classroom. In upper elementary, studies relate to human growth and development, reproduction, sexuality, and the dangers of substance abuse.
- Personal and social education is integral to North Star's learning program. Classroom life emphasizes the Montessori values of grace, courtesy, respect, and responsibility. Specific instruction through role playing and activities along with daily reinforcement guides the children.

VII. Identify Statutes And Rules To Be Suspended As A Result Of This Contract.

At this time, North Star intends to fulfill all statutes and rules required of a freeway school, with the exception of those items that apply to high schools.

VIII. Describe How Technology Will Be Integrated into Student Instruction.

While North Star focuses on a Montessori approach to education, it also recognizes the importance of preparing its students for a technology-driven world. For that reason, the school has both wired and wireless capabilities for Internet access for student and staff access. The room has two desk tops, 3 chrome books, with students using them for research, educational games, and presentations.

We are implementing several supplemental programs through the chrome books. These are Pearson SuccessMaker, Keyboarding Without Tears, IXL, and Prodigy. The students spend fifteen minutes, three times a week on SuccessMaker and fifteen minutes, twice a week on Keyboarding Without Tears. Prodigy and IXL are programs that the students can use during free time and have access to these applications at home.

IX. Describe Procedures/Plan To Ensure A Safe And Disciplined Learning

Environment.

The school conducts monthly fire drills. Its safety zone is an area at the east end of our property, near the corner of the fence around the playground. In the event of major damage to the building and the need to evacuate, North Star's evacuation route is to the Columbus Health and Rehab Center, 2100 Midway Street, three blocks to the south of the school.

North Star's "Emergency Plan," with the relevant procedures and diagrams, is attached to this application. As a small school, most responsibilities in an emergency will fall on its Head of School, Julie Begin with all lead teachers responsible for each classroom. As the school grows, these responsibilities will be delegated to the new, additional staff.

In order to ensure a disciplined learning environment, North Star follows the following guidelines:

The following behaviors are not allowed at any circumstances:

A. Physical assault (hitting, kicking, biting, spitting, etc.) of any person, including staff and other children.

- Use of Profanity
- Willful destruction of property
- Intimidation or harassment of others
- Theft

These behaviors may be cause for removal from the school, including suspension or expulsion. If any of these behaviors occur, a conference will be called between the director and the parents of the involved student(s). Action will be taken based on the severity of the offense.

B. The following behaviors are problematic in the school environment:

- Lack of self-control (outbursts of anger, running away from staff, etc.)
- Using intentionally hurtful words towards others
- Non-cooperation with other children, staff or established rules
- Any other behaviors against school policy

In these types of behaviors, staff will intervene in the following ways:

1. In the first instance the child will have time away from the group to process what happened through discussion or drawing. Staff will always emphasize the choices the child has to change their behavior. They will also work to help the child the responsibility for their behavior and take control of their actions.
2. In the second instance, staff will contact the parents and relay the occurrence to them, also reiterating the previous conversation with the child and reminding them of their options for behavior.
3. In the third instance, a meeting will be called between the child, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the director to establish what has occurred and what course of action should be taken to solve the problems
4. In the fourth instance, the child may be removed from the school, including suspension or expulsion.

X. List the School's Teachers / Administrators Credentials and License

The following teachers and staff are employed by North Star Montessori:

- Hannah Myers, Teacher; Indiana License #10208746 BA Elementary Generalist/ Mild Intervention
- We utilize Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporations, Special Services i.e. speech therapy and Emotional Behavior Support.

XI. Describe Plans For Continuing Professional Staff Development.

Professional Development is an integral part of the culture at North Star. Each teacher will commit not just to completing the hours required for licensure, but to continuous improvement through a reflective lesson study process and Montessori training/certifications.

In addition to annual traditional classroom-based professional development addressing immediate training needs. North Star's annual teacher development will begin with a facilitated goal-setting session where teachers identify both areas of personal professional growth, and larger program needs. The results of this initial session will then drive the reflective lesson study process, known as *kounaikenshuu* in Japan and outlined in the work of James Stigler and James Hiebert.

Through peer observation/coaching, collaboration and research teachers strive to reach their goals and most importantly help their students exceed expectations.

Stanford University's School Redesign Network found the following:

“When compared with high-achieving countries around the world, the U.S. appears to be significantly behind in providing certain kinds of professional learning opportunities. The differences are especially marked with respect to observational visits to other classrooms and schools, collaborative action research, and regularly scheduled collaboration among teachers on issues of instruction. It appears that teachers in the United States are not provided with nearly as much opportunity and support to engage in this kind of job-embedded learning in professional communities as those in many other countries.” (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, Orphanos, Professional Learning in the Learning Profession)

North Star's professional-development program seeks to change this dynamic.

XII. Confirm the School's Commitment to Indiana's Minimum 180 Instructional Days for Students.

North Star plans to continue an academic calendar of 180 days as a minimum.

XIII. Describe the School's Ability to Produce and Submit All Required Electronic State Student Data Reports.

North Star is continually on the IN Department of Education's website, STN Application Center, Learning Connections and North Star is utilizing the Transparent Classroom for attendance and communication with parents. The goal of the program is to, “to help bridge the gap between home and school. The goal is to simplify the day-to-day administrative chores for Montessori educators while providing a convenient way for busy parents to remain actively engaged with the school community. The end result is a more personalized connection with the classroom for all stakeholders in a child's education.”