"Free the child's potential and transform him into the world."

- Maria Montessori
About MMS

Mountaineer Montessori School was founded in 1976 by Mary McKown, a visionary educator who touched the lives of hundreds of Charleston children. What started out as one classroom with primary students (3 to 6 year olds), is now the oldest, largest and most well-established Montessori school in West Virginia, serving an estimated 1,000 students in the last four decades. Currently, 134 students ages 3 to 14 are enrolled at MMS.

At Mountaineer Montessori, we are proud of our tradition of excellence and innovation in education.

MMS is:

• a full member school of the American Montessori Society, the highest level of membership. MMS is the only Montessori school in West Virginia to achieve this status in the world's foremost Montessori professional organization.
• led by an AMS certified Montessori Administrator.
• home to the only Montessori adolescent program in the state.

MMS is an independent, non-sectarian, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization guided by an elected board of directors comprised of parent, community and faculty representatives.

Our philosophy

At MMS, we value, respect and nurture human potential. We celebrate its diversity and encourage a lifelong love of learning.

Mountaineer Montessori School exists for children.

• we view the responsibility for education as a partnership between students, teachers and parents
• we understand that children learn in many different ways;
• we acknowledge that children learn because they are interested, have creative imaginations and possess the innate desire to become competent;
• we recognize that the teacher’s role is to inspire, mentor and facilitate the learning process;
• we provide educational experiences that cultivate the child’s sense of independence, self-respect and love of peace; and
• we prepare aesthetic learning environments that meet the needs, interests and abilities of the children.

Learning without limits

For 42 years, MMS has put that philosophy into practice by offering a complete educational experience that supports the “whole child,” nurturing intellectual, social and emotional development and guiding students to reach their full potential.
We offer a discovery-based approach to education that fosters learning without limits, and children enjoy the time, space and encouragement to go as far and as high as they can. Children develop a lifetime love of learning, become confident and self-motivated and take ownership of their education.

At MMS, education is not confined to mandated government standards or a set grade level, but expands to unleash the abilities and interests of each student. Our comprehensive curriculum takes learning to a higher level, supporting deep learning and lifetime knowledge. Faculty guide children to reach their fullest potential, offering small group and individualized instruction that nurtures each student's unique gifts and talents. Learning support services supplement classroom instruction as needed.

The MMS curriculum provides an excellent academic foundation for education for high school, college and beyond and prepares students for the opportunities and challenges of the future, building tomorrow's innovators, problem solvers, community leaders, entrepreneurs and engaged global citizens.

Our school
Our unmistakable sign — a 20-foot long piece of art created by Charly Hamilton in collaboration with MMS students in 2011 — signals the joyful learning that can be found throughout our classrooms. The main campus at 308 20th Street serves primary and elementary students. It includes a vintage three-story brick school building brimming with accessible and intriguing educational materials, a colorful art studio, a menagerie of animal friends, an inviting Plus room and Apple computer lab. Our outdoor environment includes a student-designed playground and equipment, garden areas and other features that invite discovery and creativity.

Our location in the heart of Charleston just off MacCorkle Avenue provides easy access to all of the rich cultural offerings of the city, the amenities of our leafy Kanawha City neighborhood and the facilities of the University of Charleston.

The Middle School is housed at Unity of Kanawha Valley, 804 Myrtle at Bridge Road, in Charleston's South Hills neighborhood. This convenient location provides ready access to the historic Carriage Trail, the lovely Sunrise neighborhood and downtown Charleston.

Our faculty
Excellence in education starts with excellent educators. Our faculty includes AMI/AMS trained Montessori teachers and administrators, and specialists in environmental education, STEM, art, music, physical education and fitness, technology, Spanish, Positive Discipline, creative writing, history, robotics, gardening/urban agriculture and other specialty fields.

“MMS gave me a wonderful foundation for my education and a love of learning. Throughout my life, I have talked to people from many states and countries and different backgrounds, and I cannot name one person who had a better elementary school based both on happy memories and good education.”

- Emily Beal, PhD, MMS alumna and parent

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Since the beginning, MMS has held fast to the philosophy of Maria Montessori and the vision of our founder. MMS is staffed by experienced, certified Montessori teachers — enabling us to provide a superior, authentic Montessori education to the children of the Kanawha Valley. All faculty prepare at programs certified by the American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the two most recognized Montessori teacher training programs worldwide. Our curriculum is approved by the Kanawha County Schools.

Staff and volunteer leadership participate in ongoing teacher training and professional and organizational development to ensure the best educational experience possible for our students. MMS knows Montessori!

**Peace curriculum**

Maria Montessori believed in the power of education to create a better world through the child. The Montessori curriculum helps children develop respect for themselves and others, their school environment, their community and their world. At MMS, the Montessori peace philosophy is practiced in the classroom through grace and courtesy, exercises in positive communication and conflict resolution, and in the larger world through community engagement and volunteer service.

**A community of learners**

Mountaineer Montessori is not just your child’s school, it’s your school too.

At MMS parent involvement is encouraged and welcomed. Throughout the year, parents have the opportunity to observe their child’s class, meet with teachers in scheduled conferences or at other times as needed, participate in Parent Night and other educational events, and enjoy family outings and other social activities.

Keeping parents and our community up to date is a priority. A monthly newsletter, website, blog, social media channels, emails and texts deliver timely and important school information. Our office is staffed throughout the day and we strive to always have an MMS administrative or faculty member ready to answer your call.

We also invite involvement in your child’s education through the MMSPO (our parent organization); serving as a classroom parent; sharing your talents as a guest teacher, volunteering pro bono professional services, participating in fundraising activities and special events, assisting in the office, or other capacities; and/or serving on the MMS Board of Directors. Every person can play a role in enriching the MMS educational experience for our students.

**A complete educational experience**

At MMS, students and their families enjoy the benefits of our total
The Montessori difference is that the education the child receives is for the whole child and that it is such a personal path. I think that one of my favorite components of the Montessori approach is the concept of ‘following the child.’ It’s such a beautiful opportunity for children to take the lead and show the guide what resonates most with them.

- Samantha Van Den Berghe-Lynch, Primary Guide

education experience and participate in the full life of our school community. As part of the Montessori mixed-age learning environment, primary, elementary and middle school students work together on lessons and school projects, enjoy time together on the playground, and participate in many wonderful special events throughout the year. The MMS experience is shaped by many cherished traditions that have developed over our five decades. These special activities and events enrich our academic programming, foster friendships and build lifetime memories for our students and their families. From the Sixth Year Project, to student-run lunch program, to exceptional field trips, MMS offers many unique and powerful learning opportunities for our school community.

MMS celebrates the rich and vibrant diversity of our school community and actively nurtures an inclusive and open learning environment for all children. New students and those transferring from other schools are warmly welcomed and quickly become part of the fabric of our school. Perhaps our students, who wrote “At Mountaineer Montessori” (MMS School Song), said it best:

“We all come from different places
We all have different faces
And we are all connected
At Mountaineer Montessori!”

About Montessori

Montessori is an evidence-based approach to education named for Dr. Maria Montessori, the first female physician in Italy and an innovator in the study of child development and psychology. Montessori’s scientific studies form the foundation for a holistic system of learning that supports children at each stage of their development, from infancy through adulthood. The goal of a Montessori education is to unleash human potential by nurturing a child’s natural curiosity and inspiring a love of learning, intrinsic motivation, independence and social responsibility.

Today, neuroscience confirms what Dr. Montessori discovered a century ago. “Montessori is the original brain-based approach to education because it is based upon scientific principles of human development,” says Dr. Stephen Hughes, past president of the American Academy for Pediatric Neuroscience. Many of the innovations being introduced into traditional schools have been successfully implemented in Montessori classrooms for more than a century.

Montessori has grown to be the single largest pedagogy and education movement in the world, with an estimated 20,000 schools on six continents, including 5,000 in the United States. While many specialize in preschool (ages 3 to 6) education, Montessori programs can start at birth and go through 12th grade.
Mountaineer Montessori School, founded in 1976, is proud to be a part of this exciting movement. MMS is the largest and oldest Montessori school in West Virginia and offers the only Montessori adolescent program in the state.

The Montessori classroom
The Montessori classroom is a “laboratory for learning,” designed around the intellectual, social and emotional needs of children at each stage of their development.

Students are grouped in three-year age spans in the same classroom: parent-infant (ages 0 to 3), preschool (ages 3 to 6), lower and upper elementary (ages 6 to 9 and 9 to 12) and adolescence (ages 12 to 15 and 15-18). Each of these environments is designed to accurately and precisely reflect the natural learning characteristics of the child at that stage of development.

Through the use of the prepared environment, research-based materials and guidance by the trained Montessori teacher, children engage in a wide variety of tasks that encourage critical thinking, social interaction and practice with applying logical problem-solving skills — all at the level that is developmentally appropriate for the child's specific stage. Children learn the how and why of what they know as well as gain a rich storehouse of knowledge about the world.

Programs
MMS offers a fully-implemented Montessori program for children ages three to 14.

Primary
Maria Montessori believed that the goal of early childhood education is to activate the child's own natural desire to learn. The Montessori primary program, considered by many as the gold standard for early childhood education, guides children to:

- Pursue their innate desire to explore and learn
- Develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially
- Become independent, confident and self-motivated
- Develop a lifetime love of learning
- Care for themselves, their environment and community

The Montessori primary curriculum includes cultural (geography and science), language, math, practical life and sensorial. Children work at their own pace using beautiful, research-based materials and lessons that inspire interest and encourage appreciation of beauty and order. Students are given individual presentations on the materials and are free to choose from a wide choice of activities.

Our faculty closely observe each child's level of readiness for the next lesson and guide him or her through the comprehensive Montessori
curriculum. Children also engage in daily group experiences in order to build community and to develop their social skills. Most importantly, children in the primary classroom develop a love of their school community and a desire to learn, finding peaceful joy in their pursuit of knowledge.

Children pursue their work within the classroom and in the outdoor environment, which are carefully prepared with beautiful materials and activities.

Recognizing the connection between learning and movement, students enjoy ample free time outdoors. Daily outdoor sessions offer the opportunity to develop gross motor skills, strength and balance through work with boards, tires and balance beams and free time on playground equipment, and nurture social and emotional skills. Dance, yoga and other physical expression opportunities are incorporated into the classroom.

Elementary

The Montessori elementary program inspires students to explore and fulfill their individual potential through a discovery-based approach to learning. Students connect subjects together in a meaningful or “cosmic” way to discover the “hows” and the “whys” of the world as they experience the interrelationships that exist among all of the math, language and cultural subjects.

Lessons are personalized and given at each student’s pace, capitalizing on the student’s areas of interest. Hands-on materials are used to clarify abstract ideas. While independent work is encouraged, students also study in small groups or with mentors to help them learn to work cooperatively and to develop strong social skills.

The Montessori elementary curriculum includes math, history, geography, science and geometry. Spanish instruction, computer and coding skills classes and a comprehensive arts and physical education program further enrich our elementary program.

At MMS, the community is the classroom and off campus learning is an important component of the elementary curriculum. Children at all levels enrich their academic lessons through learning beyond the classroom, including “going outs” into the neighborhood, our community and state...and beyond. These include an annual three-day outdoor environment and leadership program at Spruce Knob for upper elementary.

Based on our 40 years of experience serving more than 1,000 children, students who complete our elementary program are extremely well-prepared to be successful in whatever future educational setting they choose.

“Montessori has impacted me in so many ways, from the nonrestrictive work schedule to the one-on-one teaching methods, it has pushed me to do my best without the structured and confined atmosphere of a regular school program. MMS has helped me ‘fly’ by letting me work the way I need to work and helping me the way I need to be helped.”

- Shannon Rogers, MMS student
“... although Montessori has greatly influenced my success in academics, the most important things I learned there were not from a book. The teachers treated me and all the students as equal and did not dismiss opinions and concerns just because of the age of the speaker, but listened and took every child into consideration. I learned, through my experiences, to respect everyone, especially those who share vastly different opinions than me. I learned to appreciate diversity and the value of knowing people from different backgrounds and learning from their stories.”

- Jenna Kahwash, MMS alumna

Middle School

The Montessori adolescent program is a powerful 21st-century aligned model that develops the competencies demanded in the information age. Montessori educates the whole person, fostering independence, critical thinking and a love of learning. Mountaineer Montessori Middle School prepares students to be engaged, productive and successful global citizens.

Serving seventh and eighth year students, our Middle School program combines the best of Montessori practices with current research on adolescent education, with a special emphasis on the unique intellectual, emotional and physical transitions students at this age experience. Our developmentally-aligned program offers an academically rigorous curriculum with high expectations for each student. Holistic, individualized support enables each student to develop his or her full potential as a future leader and contributing member of society.

The Montessori adolescent curriculum offers a place-based, integrated approach to education that gives students a hands-on, real-world preparation for higher education...and for life. Our program leverages natural and built resources in our community, state and beyond to offer unmatched agriculture-, nature- and entrepreneurship-based learning opportunities to adolescents. To develop a sense of place, and provide a meaningful context for student work, Middle School learning happens in a variety of places: at our school, in nature, and the city and state in which we live.

The Montessori adolescent program builds on students’ intense interest, passion and curiosity to support deep understanding of academic subjects and their connections to the world around them. Rather than learning through textbooks and lecture alone, students conduct independent research, search out primary sources, meet with experts and participate in student-led seminar discussions that develop critical thinking, verbal and written communication skills and lifetime knowledge.

Our program offers an excellent foundation for high school — and beyond. Homework, grading and testing are administered within the Montessori setting to equip students for success in future traditional educational classrooms. MMS consults with area high schools to ensure that our curriculum meets and surpasses admission requirements and to facilitate a smooth transition from our seventh- and eighth-grade program to ninth grade. Students are eligible for distance learning opportunities that offer high school credits for their work at MMS in subjects such as Algebra I and Spanish.

Enrichment

The MMS curriculum is enriched and extended through professionally-led art, computer, music, learning support services, physical education
and Spanish classes and our after-school program.

**Art:** Visual expression is embedded into academic classes and also offered through art classes with MMS faculty and guest teachers. Student take considerable pride in their work, which is featured annually in the FestivALL Art-for-All Student Art Show.

**Music:** Our music comprehensive program includes Kindermusik for full day primary friends, vocal classes, instruction in Orff instruments, recorder and piano, and strings classes, as well as performance opportunities.

**Movement:** If you want children to learn, you’ve got to let them move. MMS students enjoy outdoor free time as well as physical education classes to nurture their physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Cross country, ski club and running club are among other fitness opportunities offered.

**Technology:** Students are introduced to technology starting in their first year of elementary education. Classes are held in our Apple Lab, where students learn keyboard use, Internet safety, the full Microsoft suite of programs, graphic design and online research skills. In the spring of 2016, our comprehensive computer curriculum was expanded to include coding, a “second language” that allows students to create, communicate and construct in the digital world. Laptops and computers are also available in classrooms to support students’ learning as needed under the guidance of a faculty member. Robotics activities are integrated into the lower and upper elementary and middle school classes as well as during our summer camp program. Learning services: Montessori education meets children where they are. In addition to daily progress assessments by classroom teachers, detailed bi-annual parent/student reports and annual standardized testing, elementary students receive two private academic screenings a year to align their educational path with their individual needs and interests. Experienced specialists with advanced training work with students on a one-on-one basis to provide additional support and/or personalized lessons as needed. Our Learning Support Team is headed by MMS Director Jennifer Carriger, co-founder of the Appalachian Reading Center and the WV Learning Disabilities Association Teacher of the Year.

**Foreign language:** Students at all levels are introduced to Spanish. Twice weekly classes help students develop second language skills and broaden their global awareness. In recognition of our strong foreign language program, Spanish classes at the middle school level may be eligible for high school credit.

**Plus Program:** At Mountaineer Montessori, the learning doesn’t end when class is over. Our Plus Program extends the Montessori curriculum after school, offering a rich variety of activities and materials in a nurturing environment to keep the discovery and learning going throughout the day.
Primary half-day friends enrolled in the Plus Program enjoy lunch, circle/story time, guided Montessori activity and nap/quiet time. After 3:00 p.m., they may join older students in a variety of after school indoor and outdoor options.

In addition to the Plus Program, a great menu of after school activities is available to students. These include art, chess club, cross country and special guest programs.

**Summer Program:** Mountaineer Montessori presents popular experiential learning opportunities during summer breaks. Sessions, led by MMS faculty and guest teachers, include specialty and theme week events, with tracks for both primary- and elementary-age children. After care is available upon reservation for an additional charge.

**Excellence and innovation in education**

Since its founding, Mountaineer Montessori has enriched the lives of more than a thousand students, who have gone on to academic achievement, distinguished professional careers and active community engagement and public service. After more 40 years, we’re proud to say that we are Charleston’s — and West Virginia’s — Montessori school. We invite you to be a part of our special tradition.

"I want the students to come away with their minds full of thousands of ideas and opinions. I want my students to care about the world, to have strong feelings about the world, to abolish their apathy. I hope to model moral courage and a strong work ethic for them, and I hope that they come away with a love for work and the satisfaction it can bring."

- Jason Winesburg, Upper Elementary Guide

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**AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®**

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