



MONTESSORI CENTER SCHOOL

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

Goleta, California

Position Starts July 1, 2027



History of Montessori Center School

Founded in 1965 by a small group of Association Montessori Internationale teachers, with an initial enrollment of 55 students, Montessori Center School today celebrates 60 years of expertise and experience in whole-child education. The original campus was located at 2028 Alameda Padre Serra in Santa Barbara and was administered by Margaret and Neil Waterfall.

In 1972, MCS was turned over to a group of active and dedicated parents and teachers within the community. The school was incorporated as a nonprofit organization and was renamed Montessori Center School. Having built a reputation for excellence in early childhood and elementary education, MCS grew to over 125 children and 12 full time staff members. The school was able to establish a dedicated staff with a strong board of trustees and active board committees and had involvement from all corners of the community to ensure vital operations ran smoothly.

With notable growth of the school's enrollment, in 1975, MCS hired its first full-time school director—Margaret McCleery Cota. Under Margaret's guidance, the school enhanced its campus buildings, including a school library, and launching MCS's renowned Toddler program. By 1982, the school's enrollment had expanded to 230 students with a staff of 36. With larger enrollment of students, MCS added curricular offerings in music, art and physical education.

The North Fairview Avenue campus became MCS' home in 1997. Since then, the school has added a multi-purpose building, additional Primary and Toddler classrooms, a multi-sport campus, and a dedicated STEM Lab. With thirteen classrooms, and a teaching staff/faculty that includes 16 expertly trained Montessori teachers, MCS has grown to serve 260 children and boasts a specialist program that includes art, music, library, STEM lab, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, physical education, and drama.

Mission

The school's mission is to honor and develop the whole child from 18 months through sixth grade. We provide a nurturing, educational environment authentic to Montessori principles by fostering independent, compassionate, respectful, self-motivated, creative, life-long learners who will become positive forces to care for and transform the school's world.

Vision

MCS's vision is an authentic Montessori environment within a collaborative, engaged community of positive role models who guide the development of each child's human potential.

Core Values

- Development of the whole child
- Academic excellence
- Respect for all
- Family & community
- Learner empowerment



Toddler Program

Age Group | 18 months – 3 years

The toddler program fosters a child's independence, innate curiosity, and desire to explore. The classroom environment is designed to promote growth across all areas of early childhood development: cognitive, social, emotional, language, and physical skills.

Materials and tools are child-sized and engage all the senses. Toddlers are taught the importance of self-care and are engaged to explore their natural drive toward independence.

Each day begins with a three-hour Montessori uninterrupted work period. This fosters deep concentration and intrinsic motivation by allowing children to engage deeply with tasks and explore at their own pace, promoting independent learning and enhancing their problem-solving skills.

Freedom of movement is a fundamental principle of the Montessori method, engaging children to move independently and purposefully within their learning environment while respecting others and their surroundings. At MCS, children benefit from spacious outdoor gardens connected to each toddler classroom. With the attentive guidance of experienced teachers, they are free to explore and engage with materials in both indoor and outdoor settings throughout the day.



MCS at a Glance

- Founded: 1965
- Location: Goleta, California
- Enrollment: About 250 students
- Age Range: 18 months–Grade 6
- Student-Teacher Ratio: Approximately 8:1
- Classrooms: 13 Montessori classrooms
- Campus: Garden-style campus with outdoor learning environments for each program level
- Facilities: Multi-purpose building, STEM Lab, library, and multi-sport court
- Programs: Toddler, Primary, Elementary, and Spanish Immersion
- Faculty & Staff: About 50+ educators and staff members
- Affiliations: American Montessori Society (AMS), National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)
- Tuition assistance is available at all program levels for qualifying families.



Primary Program

Age Group | 3–6 years (including the Kindergarten Year)

Children in this plane of development learn by choosing to explore it, repeat it, and perfect it. The primary program is rooted in independent activity and choice, allowing students to work at their own pace without interruption and fostering early development of independent work habits.

In the primary years, learning is child-led and teacher-guided rather than teacher-directed. MCS's trained educators carefully observe each child's interests, strengths, and needs, and guide them in ways that meet them where they are.

Each classroom spans three years, creating a purposeful community: younger children learn by observing and interacting with older peers, while older children develop leadership and responsibility by modeling positive behavior and supporting their younger classmates.

Primary students enjoy a variety of weekly activities, including art, music, sports, library, and language classes in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

The program culminates in the Montessori kindergarten year at MCS—a time of profound growth, where the skills, independence, and curiosity cultivated in Primary come together in a purposeful, student-led environment. This leadership year empowers children to take initiative, guide their own learning, and mentor younger classmates, laying the foundation for confidence, responsibility, and a lifelong love for learning.





Elementary Program

Lower elementary | 6–9 years (grades 1-3)

Upper elementary | 9–12 years (grades 4-6)

The imaginative, social and creative child thrives in an environment with the right freedoms and boundaries. MCS's expansive elementary curriculum supports curiosity while preparing students for the challenges of the future. We don't rush childhood in MCS elementary classrooms; we cherish it.

Guided by teachers who are seasoned experts in the field of whole-child Montessori curriculum and child development, children in the Elementary program form a respectful community and support one another in their learning journeys. They learn to raise questions, think critically, and take responsibility for their own learning—all skills that will benefit them later in education and life.

Teachers guide students through a rigorous and progressive interdisciplinary curriculum geared toward their interests, needs and abilities. The end goal is to develop the students' academic skills, executive functioning capacities and self-confidence so that they can become content, independent and compassionate critical thinkers—and ultimately, positive forces to care for and transform the school's world.

A cornerstone of the elementary program, the school's outdoor education initiative nurtures curiosity, resilience, and stewardship of the environment through immersive, hands-on experiences that connect deeply with Montessori principles of independence and interconnectedness.

Lower Elementary students begin their outdoor journey with family campouts at local gems like Refugio, El Capitán, and Sage Hill campgrounds, where children and families come together to strengthen community bonds and enjoy the beauty of the school's coastal and mountain environments.

In Upper Elementary, students embark on a week-long fall science trip, rotating every three years through AstroCamp, CIMI, and Yosemite's NatureBridge, each experience aligning with their cultural studies curriculum and deepening their understanding of science, ecology, and the cosmos. In spring, students take to the trails for a three-day backcountry backpacking trip in the Santa Barbara mountains—preparing their own gear, organizing into cooking and tent groups, and developing teamwork, confidence, and a lifelong appreciation for the wilderness.

Spanish Immersion

Children in MCS' immersion program achieve bilingualism and biliteracy in Spanish and English by 6th grade while exploring and mastering the full breadth of the Montessori elementary curriculum.

The Montessori Spanish immersion program offers an enriching bilingual experience that goes beyond language learning to foster academic and metacognitive growth. Immersing students in Spanish from an early age, the approach promotes cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and creative thinking, laying a strong foundation for future academic success. As children navigate between languages, they develop a heightened awareness of language structures and cultural nuances, boosting their overall cognitive abilities. This bilingual approach also nurtures adaptability and resilience, essential skills for lifelong learning. Through engaging, hands-on activities and a supportive environment, the school's program ensures that children thrive both academically and personally.

MCS's Spanish immersion program is currently available for children ages three through 2nd grade. We are expanding the program upward through 6th grade, one grade level at a time, and will begin to serve 3rd graders in the 2026-27 school year.

Student Support Services

Montessori Center School's Student Support Services team collaborates with teachers and families to help each child flourish in the Montessori environment by understanding their unique learning profile and providing strategies, resources, and individualized support. The Montessori Method's flexible, child-centered approach—along with multi-age classrooms where students remain with the same teacher for three years—creates consistency and allows educators to develop a deep understanding of each child's development.

Within this inclusive setting, Student Support Services offers a continuum of evidence-based interventions and auxiliary supports designed to help students access the tools they need to succeed. The team works closely with families and teachers to develop individualized plans that build confidence, resilience, and a lifelong love of learning.



Services address a wide range of developmental and academic needs, including speech and language, motor development, social-emotional growth, sensory integration, attention, and specific learning differences. Learning specialists provide targeted instruction and strategies through one-on-one or small-group support, either in the on-campus learning center or within the classroom, helping students build independence, self-awareness, and success in both academic and social settings.

Enrichment Specialists

In small classes taught by experts and practitioners, MCS's students explore the interconnectedness of disciplines and the world through art, music, drama, physical education, STEM lab, library, Mandarin and Spanish each week.

To learn more about MCS's enrichment programs click [here](#).

Aftercare

We offer daily aftercare until 5:30 pm for Toddler | Primary | Elementary

MCS is here to support busy, working parents with enriching programs that extend the joy of learning beyond the school's day in a safe and structured environment.

Aftercare for children in the school's Toddler, Primary and Elementary programs offers fun and nurturing environments where children can explore new interests, make friends, and continue their learning through hands-on, play-based activities. From art and music to outdoor games and quiet time, MCS's provides choices for every child. The dedicated aftercare team makes sure the child's day is filled with discovery and delight, right up until pick-up.

Families with children enrolled in MCS's Elementary aftercare program can also choose from weekly extracurricular classes after school, including chess club, Lego robotics, interscholastic sports teams (soccer, basketball, volleyball and flag football), piano lessons, theater, jewelry making, Chinese culture club, and more—all at no additional charge.





Camp MCS

Fun and learning continue during the school's winter, spring and summer break camps. We offer week-long registration for children in MCS's Toddler, Primary and Elementary programs to make life simpler for working parents.

Camp MCS is led and staffed by Montessori Center School's own teaching team, offering a familiar, nurturing, and well-structured environment for each child. While MCS's camp sessions differ from the academic-year program and are not centered on the Montessori curriculum, they still reflect the warmth, consistency, and thoughtful care that define the school community. Each week features a unique, teacher-designed theme that invites children to learn, play, and explore across the school's beautiful garden campus—sparking curiosity, creativity, and joyful summertime growth.

The School Community

Montessori Center School is known for its nurturing environment, strong sense of community, and commitment to developing confident, compassionate, and capable young people. Families are deeply invested in the life of the school, and faculty members are valued for their dedication, professionalism, and authentic relationships with students.

Santa Barbara, is an extraordinary coastal city where outdoor learning, creativity, environmental awareness, and connection to community life are highly valued. The region offers an exceptional quality of life, with access to beaches, mountains, arts and culture, and a vibrant educational landscape.

Board of Trustees

As a 501c3 nonprofit organization, MCS is overseen by a Board of Trustees comprised of unpaid volunteers. The Board of Trustees is responsible for establishing the mission, vision, strategic goals and overall direction of Montessori Center School.



Leadership Profile for the Permanent Head of School

Montessori Center School

The Board of Trustees of Montessori Center School seeks a leader with a deep commitment to Montessori education to serve as its permanent Head of School, beginning in July 2027.

The next Head of School will join a school community distinguished by its strong Montessori foundation, deeply committed faculty and staff, and engaged families. The successful candidate will honor the school's Montessori philosophy while leading MCS strategically and thoughtfully into its next chapter of growth and sustainability.

Leadership Opportunity

This is an exciting opportunity for a mission-aligned leader to guide a highly regarded Montessori school with a strong foundation and significant potential for continued growth and impact. The next Head of School will have the opportunity to work with the MCS community and the Board to shape the school's future while honoring the values and traditions that make the community so distinctive.

Desired Qualifications and Attributes

The next Head of School will be a warm, inclusive, and collaborative leader grounded in Montessori principles and dedicated to strengthening enrollment, financial sustainability, faculty development, and community engagement.

The ideal candidate will lead with humility, strong communication skills, emotional intelligence, and a visible presence in the school's daily life. Appreciating the contributions of others and promoting the growth of all, they will engage in leadership that is truly collaborative.



The strongest candidates will bring many of the following qualities and experiences:

- A deep appreciation for Montessori philosophy and child-centered education
- Demonstrated success in educational leadership, preferably in an independent or Montessori school setting
- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to build trust across constituencies
- Strategic and organizational leadership experience, including budgeting, enrollment, and personnel management
- A collaborative leadership style that empowers others while maintaining accountability
- A commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- High emotional intelligence, resilience, and a genuine love of working with children, faculty and staff, and families
- Committed to leading with transparency, integrity, optimism, and thoughtful decision-making.
- Excited about being a thought partner with the Board regarding the future of the school

Key responsibilities and traits essential for the next MCS leader:

- **Strategic Vision & Execution:** Partner closely with the Board to shape, develop, and execute the school's next long-term strategic plan.
- **Fundraising & Community Engagement:** Drive development efforts by hiring a Development Director, launching a capital campaign, and deeply engaging families, alumni, and the broader community for financial and volunteer support.
- **Campus Relocation & Facility Planning:** Prioritize the transition to a permanent campus, balancing immediate, short-term maintenance needs with long-term site goals.
- **Programmatic Growth:** Provide thought leadership on potential program expansions, such as adding a middle school and enhancing Spanish immersion language programming.
- **Faculty Support:** Focus heavily on professional development, growth, and retention strategies for the teaching staff.
- **Business Operations & Modernization:** Bring strong business acumen to professionalize and standardize school systems, including admissions policies, Montessori certifications, teacher reviews, and market differentiation.



TO APPLY

Candidates interested in the position should submit the following materials in a **single merged PDF document**:

- EC Candidate Summary Sheet (contact Mary Seppala for this document)
- Letter of Interest, addressed to the Search Committee
- Current résumé
- Statement of Educational Leadership
- A list of five or more references with contact information (including phone numbers and email addresses)
- EC Disclosure Form (contact Mary Seppala for this document)

Please Address Inquiries to:

Mary Seppala, Educators Collaborative
mseppala@educatorscollaborative.com

Compensation:

Base salary range for this position is expected to be \$225,000-\$250,000, depending on experience and qualifications.

**MONTESSORI
CENTER SCHOOL**

A Childhood of Learning. A Lifetime of Growth.

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mcssb.org

