



WELCOME
TO

Walden Green Montessori School

whole child education ~ small, family atmosphere ~ 20:1 student to teacher ratio



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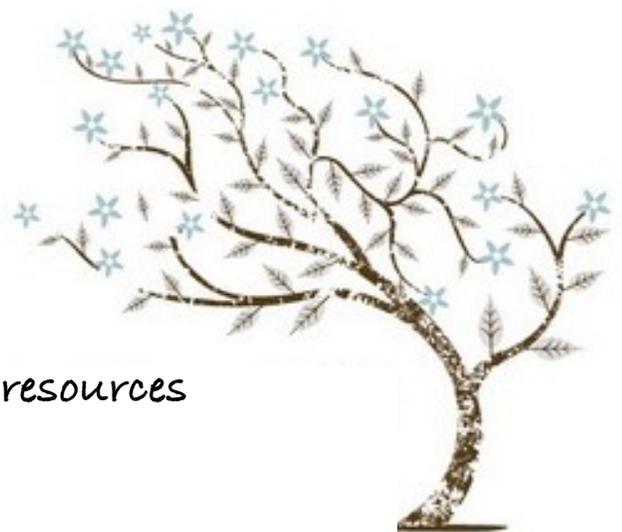
prepared by Mark Reessing



Portrait of a Walden Green Graduate

Children at Walden Green Montessori will receive a holistic education that challenges them to reach towards their fullest human potential. Each student will partake in the process of becoming:

- responsible and accountable for his/her actions
- a confident, competent, and reflective learner
- academically prepared
- autonomous/independent
- a critical and creative thinker
- a respectful problem solver
- compassionate and considerate
- a peacemaker and justice-oriented
- able to handle external authority
- a protector of the environment and its resources
- receptive towards all people
- a productive, caring community citizen





21st Century Student & the Montessori Method

In a progressive world, we need progressive and integrated education. In educating the **21st Century Learner**, we prepare children for the global experience. At Walden Green Montessori, children learn critical thinking skills, application of knowledge, analysis of information, comprehension of new ideas, communication, collaboration, problem solving, and decision making. All of these concepts and skills are **blended** with the core curriculum areas, expression of creativity, foreign language, technology, inquiry, and entrepreneurialism to give the children a diverse, demanding, and progressive education.

The 21st century has **redefined** the needs of education by its participation in a global economy in an ever-changing world. The educational system that was designed to fit a factory model and was designed to encourage conformity and compliance no longer fills the needs of the 21st century student. Students today need to be problem solvers, inquiry-based learners, creative and adaptive, self confident, high in executive functioning, technologically grounded, and skilled in research and solutions.

The Montessori approach has been the **academic choice** of the parents of many successful entrepreneurs; the benefactors of these educational experiences include the founders of Google, Larry Page and Sergey Brin; the founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos; the founder of Wikipedia, Jimmy Wales; American chef, and author, Julia Child, just to name a few. Montessori education allows children to develop their strengths and to become confident learners in whatever field or career they decide to pursue. By becoming grounded in a method of education that celebrates independence and individuality, Montessori students become successful adults and lifelong learners.

The curriculum integration of academic subject areas at Walden Green Montessori **complement** the development of children into 21st century world citizens. Teachers foster and build the skills of inquiry and research so that children become inspired to learn because they have access to the answers of their own questions. This empowerment is what offers momentum to learning at Walden Green. Coupled with inquiry and research are freedom and exploration. The students have **freedom with limits** which allows them to explore ideas and concepts that are truly interesting to them uniquely.

History and Values of the Montessori Method:

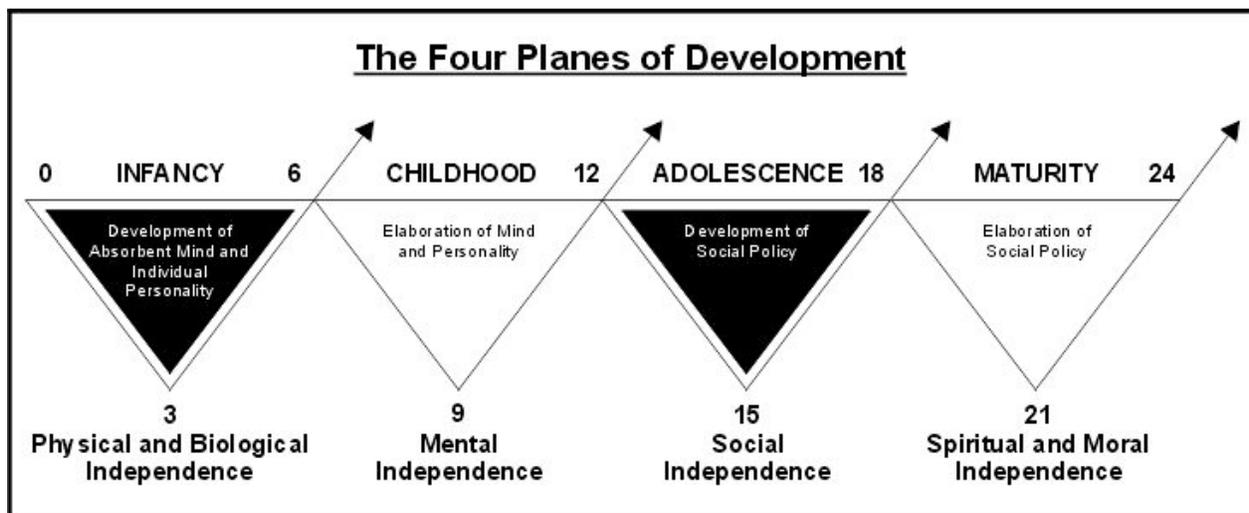
Maria Montessori was a great humanitarian, physician, educator, and philosopher. Her works from over a century ago have inspired millions of educators worldwide to establish holistic and logical learning environments where children are empowered to embrace their intellectual capabilities, independence, autonomy, individuality, and interdependence with respect, dignity, and grace. She believed that the focus of education is revealed by the needs of the child and that this process, founded in observation, will bring the child to the discovery of education in a positive and powerful way that remains a part of the child for his or her lifetime.

The Montessori Method thrives in thousands of schools worldwide. While each school has its unique variations, an authentic Montessori school shares core values that permeate its community.

- Children are motivated and succeed when their learning activities incorporate movement and opportunities for independence.
- Children become self-disciplined when empowered to choose learning activities designed for specific developmental and learning needs.
- Each classroom strives to be a respectful community of multi-age learners.
- Classrooms and other areas on campus are learning environments prepared with curriculum and materials.
- Teachers are educated and trained Montessori teachers.
- Parents understand and support the purposes of the school; they are partners.

Dr. Montessori created the **four planes of development** after extensive research and observation of the development of children. She concluded that development does not occur in a steady ascent, but instead in a series of formative planes.

The four planes of development are divided into Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood (Maturity). Each of the four planes of development is marked with specific characteristics as well as certain needs and sensitivities. Such characteristics, needs, and sensitivities differ greatly from one plane to the next; each establishes the basis for the curriculum and approach at each level at Walden Green Montessori.



Dr. Montessori's extensive research and observation of the planes of development necessitated an educational approach that facilitates an extended educational time frame where children learn based on the time lines of their own development. A Montessori education is sequential and meant to be experienced over a **multi-aged learning environment**.

Math and language lessons are taught individually and in small groups with careful consideration to sequencing, age appropriateness of content, and needs of the child. Our history, science, and cultural lessons are taught over the course of a two to three year curriculum. While core lessons are taught every year; further discovery, and exploration of concepts are divided among several years so significant inquiry and depth can be achieved.

The beauty of the Montessori classroom comes through strongly because of the inclusion of **multiple ages** in one environment. Classrooms have an age span of two to three years. This creates a community of students who possess beginning, developing, and proficient skills of all concepts being taught. Because of the social nature of children, they naturally want to share their insights and experiences with each other. When allowed to share work time together, children impart knowledge to each other in a way that adults cannot. This is because the relationships, mode of teaching, and conversations are among peers.

Children at Walden Green are grouped in **mixed ages** and **abilities**; Children's House (K-1st), Lower Elementary (2nd-3rd), Upper Elementary (4th-6th), and Middle School (7th-8th). By fostering learning in a multi-age classroom, children are empowered to teach and guide each other, learn collaboratively, and work to their particular abilities and interest levels.

"The child's progress does not depend only on his age, but also on being free to look about him. Our schools are alive. To understand what the older ones are doing fills the little ones with enthusiasm. The older ones will be happy to teach what they know."



Walden Green Montessori School

Grace & Courtesy The Work Cycle Spiral Curriculum

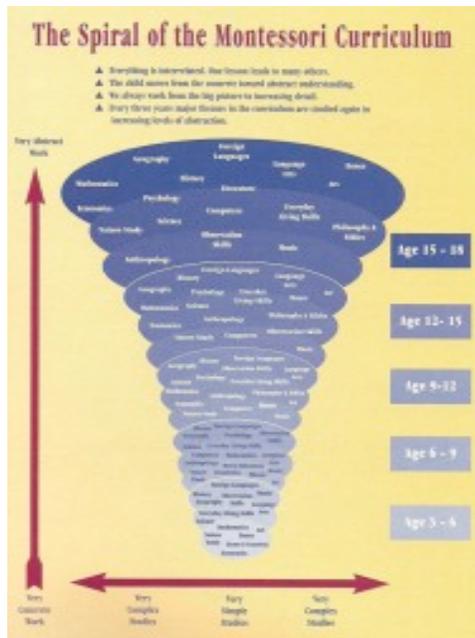
A very important aspect of life in a Montessori school is the education of the **social being** in addition to the education of the **intellect**. This is what makes a difference for so many families and children who attend our school. At Walden Green Montessori, we share a common belief that learning how to navigate ourselves emotionally and socially is a priceless life skill. It begins in our earliest ages as the **Grace and Courtesy** Curriculum. Children learn simple but essential life skills that are required in the social world: shaking hands, greeting a friend or visitor, preparing a meal, writing thank you notes, and voicing peacefully a hurt feeling or perceived event of injustice.

As our children grow and move to more advanced levels within our school, the **expectation** and **education** of the interpersonal being advances as well. Children learn to listen, to validate other's feelings, and to accurately name and express emotions; they learn self-awareness and self-control. To be emotionally intelligent requires that people look outside of their personal needs in a sensible and empathetic way. We work for students to measure the feelings of others not necessarily based on how they want to be treated, but on how others want to be treated.

An **uninterrupted work cycle** is a key attribute of the Montessori curriculum and philosophy. At every program level, the classroom schedule is organized in a way that provides at least one uninterrupted work time every day. The teachers/guides are mindful to plan related arts activities and events during a time frame that does not detract from the success of the children's work time. The exact length of the work cycle varies based on the age and developmental needs of the children at each program level.

The purpose of a long, uninterrupted work cycle is to provide children the **opportunity** to choose work freely, complete tasks, and become fully engaged and engrossed in their exploration. During the work cycle, children work individually and in small groups on self-selected materials. The work cycle also provides an opportunity for classroom teachers/guides to work with children and give lessons and guidance individually. Adults and children alike respect concentration and meaningful exploration and do not interrupt another who is engaged in productive work. The typical 3-hour work cycle begins around 9:00 AM.

The comprehensive Montessori Curriculum is arranged in a **spiral plane**. This model is a central axis of disciplines wrapped by a spiraling plane that expands outward and to a deeper degree into each concentration as the children advance in age. The center of the spiral holds the basic universal information related to the curricular areas, and moving to the outer edges, becomes a more comprehensive study each time it is revisited by the teacher and the children.





Assessing the Student & The Global Classroom

At Walden Green Montessori, we use multiple forms of **assessment** to determine social, personal, and academic progress for the individual child. The methods we use largely include observation and individual assessment of the child's performance. To assess children individually, we make note of rate of completion and accuracy, ability to stay organized and on task, and willingness and ability to work within the community. Assigned work is assessed using multiple methods: individual review and revision, whole group lesson participation, and small group lesson demonstration of knowledge. **Observation** lends the opportunity to assess preference, strength, and avoidance academically, personally, and socially. These things are all critical to understanding your child.

Additional forms of assessment include oral and written examination and demonstration of knowledge through presentations and lessons to peers. These are authentic opportunities for assessment. EdPerformance Scantron Series testing is another form of assessment used at Walden Green Montessori (mandated by Central Michigan University). It offers a **nationally standardized** view of your child's ability to take a test. Our rationale for using the EdPerformance test is three-fold: to give children the real life experience of testing, to identify areas of strength and need for children within our curriculum, and to have a standardized document (in addition to SBAC/ Common Core data) for children to carry with them to schools when they leave Walden Green Montessori.

Portfolio Assessment at Walden Green:

Since traditional achievement tests tend to reveal only whether the child can recognize, recall or "plug in" what was learned out of context, they are only one portion of a complete assessment package. They do not (and cannot) evaluate the whole child. Montessori education is a holistic approach to education and the integration of **student portfolios** is another highly effective authentic assessment tool at Walden Green.

Portfolios are actual samples of students' work taken over time and evaluated by the teacher and student against a 'rubric' or set concrete assessment criteria according to age appropriate benchmarks. Based upon research, the portfolio is very **beneficial** for the Montessori child. In addition to being a versatile evaluation method, portfolios are a very practical approach for assembling and interpreting student work and for assessing student performance in relation to instructional objectives. As an assessment tool, they can be utilized to encourage student creativity, self-reflection, and higher-level thinking.

Furthermore, reporting progress to parents through narrative reports and the portfolios provides much more meaningful information than letter grades sent home on a report card or percentiles displayed on standardized tests. In other words, portfolios are a method of evaluation well suited to Montessori classrooms because they emphasize the process of **discovery**, not just the product.

Global Classroom:

In our current world of technology, creativity, entrepreneurship, collaboration and instant access to information across our globe, our children need to function confidently and feel comfortable navigating themselves in an environment that reflects this same scenario. To achieve this ambitious goal, we involve children in many experiences in order to develop their abilities. The Walden Green faculty teaches children the importance of functioning **interdependently within the community of Walden Green** and to understand what that means. We teach receptivity, communication, collaboration, independence, time management, use of inquiry, development of research skills, creative application of ideas, and process of creation, revision, and finalization of ideas. Children complete their own pursuits of information and bring them to a significant full circle by presenting or sharing with their communities. Children use multiple modes for presentations which may include any combination of oral, written, demonstration, visual, and digital platforms. These range in formality from one on one, to small or large group presentations, to formal presentations. We continue to follow the path out of the classrooms to allow our children to experience various excursion experiences, which in turn deeply enriches their cultural awareness and understanding. Furthermore, we consciously organize programs of **community service** ranging from daily contributions to others within the class or school setting, to community outreach programs that allow children to make a **difference** in the lives of others. The fundamental idea is one of **stewardship**.



Walden Green Montessori School

What should I be doing at home to support my child?

First and foremost you should encourage **communication** for self. The art of communication is not an easy one for many to master, and is a critical lifelong skill. Some children are highly resistant to communicating concerns, questions, or insecurities to their teachers and friends. Many times, it seems, parents feel that they are helping their children avoid pain and discomfort by communicating for them. While this may be the case temporarily, the best thing for any child who is resistant to communicate is to **begin the process of learning how to communicate successfully**. At Walden Green Montessori, we encourage and invite communication from the child and honor their opinions, requests, and needs in the most logical and supportive manner possible. Many times, our toughest challenges are easily remedied by the words and insights of children.

Learn to recognize attention-seeking behavior and the motivation behind it. Jane Nelson, creator of the Positive Discipline series has identified goals that children may be seeking in their behavior: Undue Attention, Misguided Power, Revenge, or Assumed Inadequacy. See the chart on the next page with more information on these Misguided Goals. Begin to ask questions to try to determine what might possibly be on the other side of your child's concerns at home about school. Many times, discomfort or upset is actually caused by a concern that is not being given a voice. If we can recognize a child's needs through conversations, we can make great strides in our community.

Another very important thing you can do for your child is to **support time management** through establishing a schedule of free time, family time, after school activities, care of self, and home & school responsibilities. This schedule, created in a **collaborative** effort with your child, will offer additional support to decision making aspects of time management at home. Time management sets your child up to manage the responsibilities of home and school. A key to this whole scenario is placement of accountability. If the accountability to check behind the child is placed solely on the parent, this makes the parent accountable instead of the child. Consequences and agreements need to be mutual, a schedule needs to be available to all, and the child needs to follow it as much as possible. The consequence comes into play when the child does not follow through on commitments. It should rarely, if ever, be the parent's fault. Accepting accountability for a child not following through sets up a dependence and lack of accountability for the child, which lands directly in the parent's lap.

How do I know if my child is at "grade level"?

At Walden Green Montessori, every classroom teacher understands and is aware of the state standards for your child's "grade level". These standards are **included** in our curriculum; while they may be arranged in a different sequence than other schools, they are present throughout the curriculum in its entirety. If there is a concern that your child is not performing at grade level, or will not be by the end of the school year, your child's teacher will inform you. We use a formal documentation system that provides clear explanation of your child's **progress** according to age-appropriate **benchmarks**. Many times a child may not "perform" to his or her potential for a period of time, and this is usually due to a need for some other growth: either social, organizational, or a specific academic area. Many times we will see major growth in just one area at a time (mathematics, writing skills, reading comprehension, etc...). Sometimes there is a need to settle social or emotional needs which may interfere with productivity. With patience, perseverance, and understanding, these things all work toward the full success of a well rounded child.

How does Montessori get my child ready for the "real world"?

Let's start by defining the "real" world... At your job, is everyone the exact same age? Is everyone sitting at their desks, doing a similar thing at the same time? Are they doing tasks that require them to access knowledge, off the top of their heads, in a timed setting? **OR**... Do you have different people with different levels of experience working with you? Do you collaborate with your colleagues on projects? Do you need to be able to set up work, concentrate on it, keep it organized, and put it away? Do you have to be able to work independently, and work in a group? Do you need to try things and discover that they work or don't work? Do you need to be able to problem solve? Communicate effectively? Montessori **IS** the **REAL** world.

KEY MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES AT WALDEN GREEN MONTESSORI

Child-Centered Learning

The focus of activity at Walden Green is on children learning, not teachers teaching.

Hands-On Learning

Direct contact with real objects of study bring learning concepts to life and allow children to understand them more deeply.

Intrinsic Motivation

Each child's own internal motivation is fostered through freedom of choice and independent activities.

Focus on Individual Development

Children progress at a personal pace and receive individual attention from teachers as they move through each area of learning.

Cooperation and Collaboration

Children are encouraged to work in partnership with others and treat each other with respect and kindness.

Child as Spiritual Being

Walden Green Montessori recognizes each child as a full and complete and human being and celebrates the spirit within each child.

Global Understanding

The curriculum at Walden Green Montessori is international in its heritage and focus, and consciously seeks to promote a global perspective.

Service to Others

Community service initiatives within the classroom, school, and beyond help promote the ideas of stewardship and compassion.

