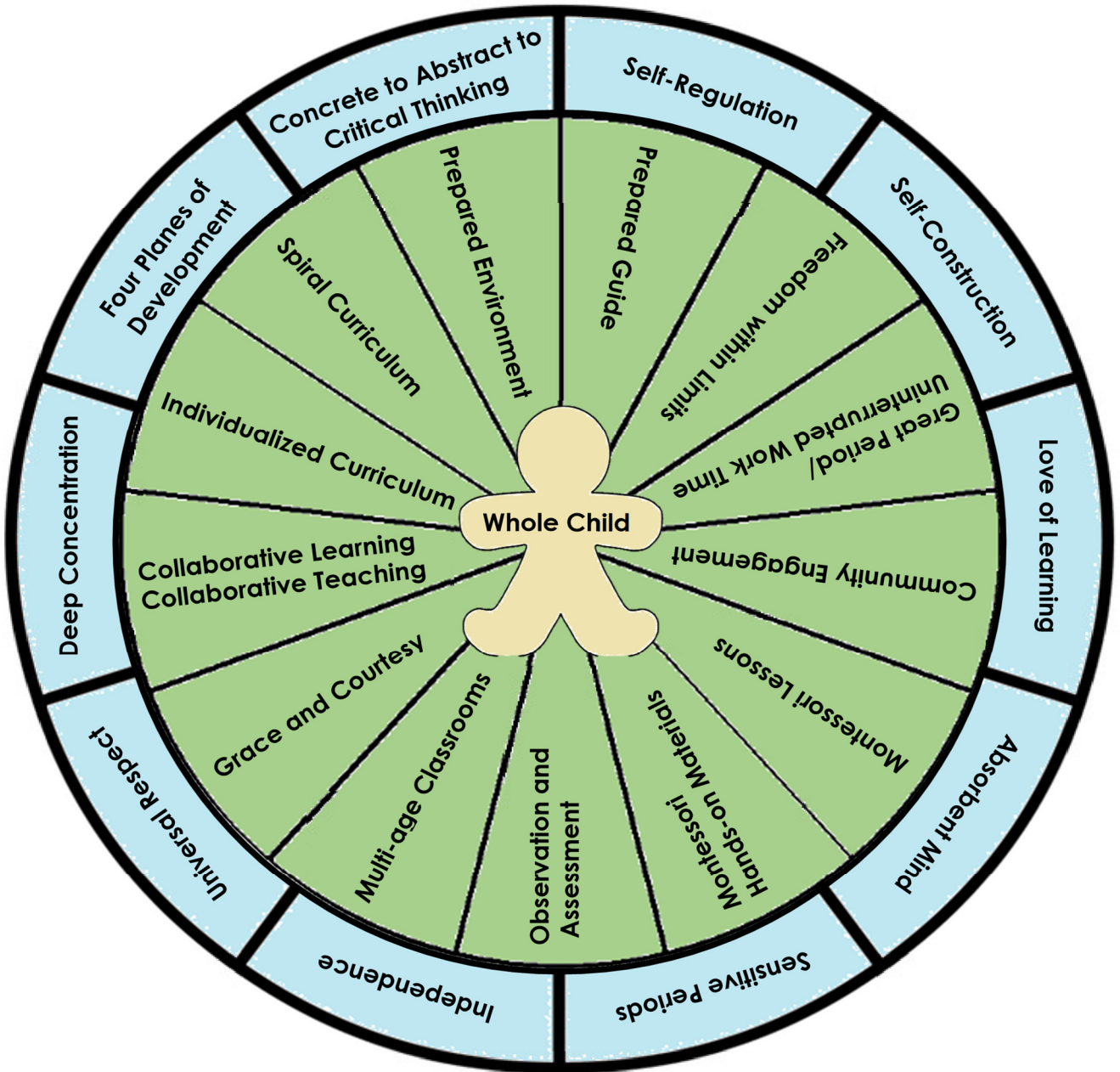


Chippewa Valley Montessori Charter School

Identity



Foundations

Methods

Chippewa Valley Montessori Charter School Identity

This document presents language that defines the foundational values, principles, and methods of the CVMCS.

Whole Child

Montessori values the human spirit and the development of the whole child—physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. The Montessori Method of teaching aims for the fullest possible development of the whole child, ultimately preparing the child for life's many rich experiences.

Foundations

- **Concrete to Abstract to Critical Thinking.** Each concrete material isolates a specific abstract concept in order to make it clear. Initially, lessons and activities are introduced simply and concretely. Later, they become more abstract and complex as children progress, leading to critical thinking and academic achievement.
- **Deep Concentration.** In a Montessori classroom, there is significant respect for children who are concentrating and focused on their work. Concentration produces an inner discipline. It is when children are deeply concentrating, without distraction, that their brains are constructing themselves.
- **Four Planes of Development.** Based on direct observation of children at different ages in many cultures throughout the world, Maria Montessori categorized the stages of development from infancy to adulthood into 4 formative planes of development. Each plane spans a period of 6 years and has specific characteristics that naturally guide children through physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.
- **Absorbent Mind.** Much like a camera, the young child's absorbent mind effortlessly and unconsciously records impressions and stimuli. The absorbent mind is the inspiration behind Dr. Montessori's theories of how children learn.
- **Sensitive Periods.** During sensitive periods, children have a tremendous ability to learn and assimilate from the world around them. Periods are characterized by an innate drive to focus on one specific skill without tiring.

- **Independence.** Achieving independence is a major goal in a child's development. Maria Montessori believed that every child is born with a potential for independence. When children are able to do things for themselves, they gain confidence and self-esteem and learn how to think and problem solve.
- **Love of Learning.** Learning is an exciting process of discovery, leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning. Montessori education offers children opportunities to develop their potential as they step out into the world as engaged, competent, responsible, and respectful citizens with an understanding and appreciation that learning is for life.
- **Self-Construction.** Ultimately, the goal of Montessori education is for children to autonomously develop the skills necessary for productive and fulfilling lives. Using an independent learning model, students are active participants in deciding what their focus of learning will be. Self-assessment and self-correction are integral aspects of the Montessori classroom approach. As they mature, students learn to look critically at their work, and become adept at recognizing, correcting, and learning from their errors. Given the freedom and support to question, to probe deeply, and to make connections, Montessori students become confident, enthusiastic, self-directed learners. They are able to think critically, work collaboratively, and act confidently.
- **Self-Regulation.** Self-regulation refers to the mindful behaviors that children use to control their impulses. Self-regulation should not be confused with obedience or compliance. When children are truly self-regulated, they behave the same way whether or not the guide (or adult) is present. Beginning at an early age, Montessori students develop order, coordination, concentration, and independence which promote self-regulation. These skills are nurtured by the prepared environment, guide, materials, and daily routines.
- **Universal Respect.** Children learn integrity and an all-encompassing respect which includes self-respect, respect for others, and respect for the world and everything in it. Creating an environment where children learn respect is foundational in Montessori education.

Methods

- **Prepared Guide.** The role of the adult in a Montessori classroom is not to teach. Instead, it is to guide children toward fulfilling their true potentials by preparing an environment that supports each child's specific needs and challenges their individual abilities. Therefore, nurturing the whole child looks different for each student. Students are supported in becoming active seekers of knowledge. Guides provide environments where students have the freedom and the tools to pursue answers to their own questions.

- **Collaborative Learning/Collaborative Teaching.** Collaborative learning is a staple of elementary life. Montessori observed that children learn best in groups. Working together enhances social skills and promotes the sharing of ideas.
- **Freedoms within Limits.** Working within parameters set by their guides, students experience freedom in three primary areas: freedom of choice, freedom to repeat, and freedom of movement. Freedom of choice builds self-regulation, confidence and intrinsic motivation. Freedom to repeat fosters problem solving skills and concentration. Freedom of movement can facilitate development of coordination and can accommodate various learning styles. All three freedoms develop independence. Of course, these freedoms must also be carefully balanced with appropriate and consistent limitations.
- **Great Period/Uninterrupted Work Time.** A two-three hour uninterrupted work cycle is an important component of a successful Montessori program. Children are able to become fully engaged in a variety of challenging activities and concentrate for long periods of time if they have the predictability of an uninterrupted work cycle. Any interruption to the child's work period disrupts concentration.
- **Individualized Curriculum.** Montessori education recognizes that children learn in different ways at different rates. Each student is guided through the curriculum based on guide observation and assessment.
- **Montessori Lessons.** Lessons focus on the following curricular areas: practical life, sensorial, math, language arts, science, culture, music, art, and physical education. Three-period lessons are often used to introduce new concepts to children. Through practice, children move from basic understanding to mastery. The knowledge gained during these lessons becomes the starting point for the next quest for knowledge. Every time children master a skill or idea, they become stronger and want to learn more.
- **Grace and Courtesy.** Learning how to navigate emotionally and socially begins at an early age through the Grace and Courtesy Curriculum. Children learn simple but essential life skills such as listening, validating other's feelings, and how to accurately name and express emotions; they learn self-awareness and self-control. Acting with grace and courtesy toward others is modeled by the adults, and courteous behavior and consideration for others is expected. Students are taught to be responsible to their peers and community through their words, actions, and deeds.
- **Community Engagement.** Children need to function confidently and feel comfortable navigating environments outside their school and homes. Children are engaged in many experiences in order to develop their abilities to learn and serve their broader communities.

- **Multi-age Classroom.** The multi-age classroom, typically spanning 3 years, is a close, caring learning community which provides unlimited opportunities for social development as children observe and interact with their peers. Children are empowered to teach and guide each other, learn collaboratively, and work to their particular abilities and interest levels. Older students enjoy stature as mentors and role models and reinforce their own learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered to their younger peers. Younger children feel supported as they learn from the older children and gain confidence about the challenges ahead. These multi-age groupings promote diversity, flexibility, and cooperation which are integral aspects of Montessori education.
- **Observation and Assessment.** Through careful observation, Montessori guides come to know each student's interests, learning style, and temperament. They understand students' developmental needs, and are receptive to sensitive periods, when they are most ready to learn a new concept or skill. With this information, the guides choose materials and lessons that will capture the students' attention and entice them to learn as individuals and in small groups. Observation is the primary source of assessment, supplemented by state-mandated testing.
- **Prepared Environment.** The prepared environment is a dynamic, alive, and beautiful place which offers children numerous experiences, stimuli, and interactions. There are well-defined areas within the classroom for each curricular area, such as Language Arts, Math, and Culture. Each of these areas features shelves or display tables with a variety of inviting materials from which students can choose.
- **Spiral Curriculum.** The spiral curriculum exposes students to many interrelated topics repeatedly over time because one lesson leads to many others. Children continue to build sequentially on previously learned skills by re-exploring the same materials at different levels as they continue through the program each year. With each repetition, children build on the knowledge they already have about a topic, delving deeper into the details, seeing the connections more clearly, and ultimately developing a deep understanding of our complex world. Starting with the broad picture and increasing detail while narrowing the focus, the child moves from concrete experiences toward abstract understanding.

Prepared by the CVMCS Governance Board Identity Committee and Montessori guides.