

Renaissance Academy Charter School

Educational Philosophy

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WHY MONTESSORI?

- Individualized Curriculum
- Scientifically Designed
- Based on Brain Development
- Social Growth
- Joyfully Learn at Greatest Potential

Why Montessori?

Because it has an unsurpassed record of success. Montessori schools enable children to learn more with greater ease and joy. This system focuses on educating the whole child - intellectually, socially, and emotionally. It helps children gain confidence and skill while each learns to his or her greatest potential.



Individualized Curriculum

The goal of Renaissance Charter School is to create an environment in which every child can learn in his or her own best way. Instead of the entire class being taught as a unit, students are treated as individuals progressing at their own pace, each at the ideal time for learning some particular skill and each student are helped to learn in the manner that works best for him or her. Rooms are arranged according to areas of learning – reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, and so on. Scientifically designed materials are provided for hands-on manipulation, and the child is lead step-by-step toward abstract knowledge. The materials are self-correcting so the students will work successfully. As students grow older and are ready for more abstract thinking, they use textbooks, original sources, and research materials to expand their learning.

Scientifically Designed

Italian physician Maria Montessori created this method of education a century ago. She began a revolution in education accidentally. When working with young children in a medical facility she approached the process of learning as a scientist, observing the children to find out how they learned best. She discovered that children have basic needs and natural tendencies, and when these are met the children progress rapidly. Dr. Montessori designed teaching tools that enabled these children to learn things never expected of them. Test scores that rated these children higher than their peers in traditional schools were so remarkable that she gained international attention. Montessori's own response was to question the traditional schools' methods.

Dr. Montessori was asked to run a center for young children in a very poor neighborhood. These children also surpassed all expectations, and outscored their age-mates in top quality schools. Word of Montessori's method spread and it was adopted in schools throughout Europe. She expanded her methods to include children from all parts of society and of all ages.

Renaissance Charter school students will significantly outscore their peers on standardized testing. While every child is not gifted in the same way, each can be helped to reach his or her own highest level and that is enough to make them shine on tests.

Based on Brain Development

Montessori discovered that there are "planes of development" during which children have different focuses and learn in different ways, so she designed her schools to cater to these natural patterns. Montessori observed that young children learn best through the use of their senses. They need to touch, feel, move, see, hear, smell, and taste. They enjoy repetition and care little about the product of their action. Older children develop reasoning. They are more social and care deeply about the product of their work. Dr. Montessori designed learning materials to give sensory experience to young children and methods to help elementary students develop their abstract reasoning.

Social Growth

Because she found that learning often comes from interaction with other children, Maria Montessori designed classrooms with three-year age spans, in accordance to the planes of development. At Renaissance Charter School younger students learn by watching older ones, older children solidify understanding by teaching the younger. Every child learns at his or her own pace, without feeling out of place. Children's respect for each other and the classroom is fostered by lessons of grace and courtesy. While developing individually, each child feels part of a group.

Montessori schools have long been recognized as optimal environments for gifted students, because the child is allowed to advance as far as he or she is capable. But for the same reason the schools are actually optimal environments for every child. At Renaissance Charter School, this educational method will help every child whose family supports it.



Joyfully Learn at Greatest Potential

To most parents, much of the above sounds familiar, because this is how our own young children learn at home. We don't teach how to run with lectures, but by creating a setting and foundation for a child to learn. We set the young infant down in a safe place so he can build strength lifting himself. We provide toys that encourage interest and movement. We provide an environment for him to crawl, with interesting items to seek out. We let babies crawl for some time before holding their hands for their first steps. At the right time we provide walking toys. Although the baby may fall many times, he or she always gets up and tries again. We set the place, guide and encourage. And when a child finally walks parents say, "He learned" - not "I taught him." Once those first steps are taken, we can't stop the child from learning to run.

Good parents provide a safe and stimulating environment with the interaction necessary for their child/infant to learn to crawl, walk, and talk. This is the model for a Montessori classroom. Montessori schools provide a safe and stimulating environment with the

interaction necessary for students to learn sounds, then to read, and ultimately to read great literature; this continues with all areas of the curriculum. A carefully arranged environment is prepared for each child to learn, followed by guidance, help, and encouragement. The children learn naturally and joyfully.



To support this lifelong process of learning, Renaissance Charter School has a strong core curriculum that exceeds Indiana Standards at every grade level and the school holds high expectations for each child. Subjects include English and Foreign Language, Mathematics, Reading/Literature, Composition, Science, History, Geography, Art, Music, and varied enrichment classes. While courses and overall curriculum are the same for

every student, each child is treated as the individual s/he is. Students are not held back to wait for the group to catch up or placed in levels beyond their ability. Instead, each child is allowed to steadily progress through the curriculum at his or her own best pace in each subject area. Attached you will find the progression for each subject area and listings of the expectations for a typical student at each grade level. Of course, some students may progress to levels far beyond the typical expectations while others may need more time to develop. Renaissance Charter School is designed to help all students feel comfortable with themselves, discover their strengths, overcome their weaknesses, and become the best they can be.

The Renaissance Charter School Montessori method is an effective choice for every student who enrolls, regardless of the individual's educational background and whether or not the student has ever attended a Montessori school before. While some educators assume that students need a certain background, specifically a consistent Montessori background, to succeed in a school that embraces the Montessori philosophy of education, the organizers of Renaissance Charter School do not accept this premise. In fact, it is a fundamental aspect of the philosophy of the school to take students from where they are, wherever they are, and help each reach his or her own highest levels. Their school background does not impact this. The philosophy and methods are in place to help every child, not to set up a hindrance. The ability of students to successfully integrate into a Montessori school has been resoundingly proven at RA. Students have enrolled at RA, joining a Montessori classroom for the first time, at every point along the kindergarten through eighth grade path, and every one of them has been able to thrive in the setting. Renaissance Charter School will welcome, and market to, students from all varieties of schools.

It is the goal of Renaissance Charter School to keep each child challenged, to constantly raise the bar, to assist in overall social, emotional, and academic development, to immerse students in a rich learning environment, filled with information, varied experiences, and high expectations. Students are required to work, to focus, to learn, practice, repeat, and achieve. This is done though, with varied expectations and methods for each. Hands-on learning activities, lectures, textbooks, novels, field trips, guest speakers, stories, discussions, and group interaction are used to find the best way to reach each student in each area of learning, and also to help each student learn about learning and about himself, to experience joy in learning, to gain confidence, and to find ways to reach for the best.

