

# CASE FOR SUPPORT



## Something special

Every child is special. Any parent or educator will tell you that. But there is something in the Montessori child that makes him or her stand out in the crowd. They're often cited as compassionate and socially aware; independently driven yet collaborative. That's no accident. Far from it. In fact, Montessori education places the child's social, emotional and intellectual development at the forefront to help ensure children mature into compassionate, engaged and responsible adults.

*After they leave us, they leave the world inspired.*

## Help us inspire the world....

Montessori Academy of London may seem like a dot on the map compared to the vast network of publically funded schools in the city. But despite our size, we have a huge impact on our community through our unique approach to education that's equal parts innovation and tradition.

Montessori is an educational approach that truly puts the children first. It allows children to grow and develop at their own pace while teaching them that independence does not equal isolation. We are all part of a greater community and each one of us can have a positive impact on our world.

But, unfortunately, Montessori education in this area of the country comes with a price tag. As an independently funded school in Ontario, we don't receive any support from the provincial government. Make no mistake: we're an independent school, but we're not exclusive or elitist – nor do we want to be. In fact, we believe that in a perfect world, every child would receive a Montessori education. Until that dream becomes a reality, we need your help to continue to provide this innovative education option in London.



Junior High students getting ready to set out on a bike trip to Harris Park.

## Our mission

To provide a world-class Montessori education that promotes academic excellence and prepares children and young adults to engage the world as active citizens and successful leaders.

# About Us

Montessori Academy of London is the only accredited Montessori school in the London area that offers a continuum of traditional Montessori programs for Toddlers, Casa (preschool), Elementary and Junior High students.

We are accredited by the Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators (CCMA) every five years to ensure the standard and quality of education our children receive reflects traditional Montessori while supporting the ever-evolving needs of our children. Close to 340 students are supported by more than 60 part- and full-time faculty and staff.

In 2010, we became a registered charity with not-for-profit status. We applied for this status so that we could be recognized as a charitable organization focused on improving the lives of others through education, and creating a culture that is not just for those who can afford it, but for those who truly believe in and support Montessori.

**As a not-for-profit organization, we are committed to continuously re-investing in our school for the benefit of our children, families and greater community. We are about people, not profit.**

## The problem we face...

Ask any school administrator – regardless of the school board or location – what their biggest issue is, and they'll likely say "having to do more with less and less money." Our school is not immune to this reality. In fact, we may be worse off. The cost to offer high-quality Montessori continues to increase along with all our other expenses. Yet we do not receive any funding from the government.

Provinces such as Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan have public funding available for private schools – upwards of 70% of the cost to educate each child – including Montessori schools. In Ontario, independent schools receive 0% from the provincial government.

Like any school, our expenses continue to rise. Despite that fact, we want to ensure tuition doesn't skyrocket. Close to 99% of our operational costs, including capital improvements, faculty and staff pay, and programs are covered by tuition.

**To continue to provide quality Montessori education in the London area, we need YOUR support.**

# Our History

**1968** Our doors open as Montessori House of Children in a church basement with 30 preschool students.

**1973** The foundations for an Elementary program begin.

**1980** Our school becomes a founding member of the Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators (CCMA).

**1982** A full Lower Elementary program begins.

**1985** The Upper Elementary program is created.

**1988** We become the first Canadian Montessori school to offer a Junior High program.

**1992** We are accredited by CCMA and revisit the process every five years to remain the only accredited school in London.

**1999** A Toddler community is added to the school, and we become one of only a few Montessori schools to offer a full Toddler to Grade 8 program.

**2010** We become a not-for-profit registered charity with a Board of Governors.

**2012** Our name becomes Montessori Academy of London to reflect what we have become over the past 45 years: a rigorous academic program located in London and grounded in Montessori educational philosophy. We launch our first strategic plan: *Our Path to 2017: Strategic Priorities and Initiatives* to guide us into the future.

**2015-2016** The Toddler & Casa program is licensed under Ontario's *Childcare & Early Years Act*.

# What do your gifts support?

There are five areas of need that fundraising supports: Programs, Capital improvements, Faculty Development, Financial Support, and Special Projects. “Unrestricted” donations that are not directed to any of the above areas support the areas of greatest need.

## Programs

One of the key elements of a true Montessori education is the Montessori classroom. Everything in the classroom is intentional and geared to invite the child to delve into their interests and guide their own learning – from the appropriately sized furniture and tools; to colourful, aesthetically pleasing material; to bright, airy spaces.

Dr. Montessori was one of the first educators to realize that children learn better when they use their sense of touch, which is why the Montessori material is key to the classroom and curriculum.

Developed more than 100 years ago, Montessori materials have stood the test of time, and continue to inspire children to explore and learn on their own. Each piece of specialized material is expensive to purchase because of the attention to detail and quality of construction. Because material is used by multiple classrooms and through multiple levels, we need many duplicates of key pieces.

Some costs of typical Montessori material:

- Small square root board – used in Upper Elementary: \$35
- Pink tower – used in Toddler and Casa: \$80
- Number rods – used in Toddler and Casa: \$188
- Complete bead materials – used in Toddler, Casa and Lower Elementary: \$405

Although our programs are rooted deeply in traditional Montessori, MA is committed to providing our students education that keeps pace with our modern world. In September 2015, we introduced Google Chromebook technology into our Junior High program thanks to generous supporters who gave to our Legacy Gift and at our fundraising gala in May 2015.

---

*“We see how the Toddler program fosters generosity, empathy, intellectual curiosity, the love of learning, self-confidence, focus and determination in our young daughter. We feel confident that the Montessori curriculum is meeting and exceeding our child’s learning and development needs and would not hesitate to recommend to others considering the program for their children.” – MA Toddler parents*

---

Montessori’s unique Peace Education and virtues lessons address each child’s emotional development and support our Vision of a community of confident, compassionate and engaged citizens who think globally, act responsibly and collaborate successfully to create a humane world.

## Capital improvements

Dr. Montessori’s first classrooms, *Casa dei bambini*, translates to “house of children.” It’s no coincidence that ours are former residences, too. We’re proud of our beautiful, older homes, but as any homeowner knows, maintenance of buildings and properties are a large budget expenditure. Annual repairs and upgrades are regularly needed. If the upgrades aren’t needed inside, they’re needed outside. Dr. Montessori once said, “Play is the work of the child,” and so, our outdoor “learning environments” are just as important to our students as our classrooms. Between our cold climate and daily use by hundreds of exuberant students, our outdoor environments are regularly in need of repairs and improvements.



Brightly coloured, engaging material is key to Montessori education.

We want to ensure our students have inventive, creative and physically diverse outdoor environments that support their creativity and learning. Our Westmount location's outdoor learning environment is an example of how gifts support our programming; completely overhauled in 2015, this play space has already hugely affected the development of our Casa students who attend the Academy's location on Commissioners Road.

These updates will also help us to comply with new provincial legislation...But there is always more to do at all of our locations.

## Faculty Development

Our teaching team is our most prized asset. Their commitment to our students and Montessori is invaluable – and, frankly, unique in its own right. We need to continue to invest in our teachers to ensure they have the professional development opportunities that will help them provide extraordinary education to our students.

- Visiting another school in Ontario: \$50
- Visiting another school outside of Ontario: \$250
- Webinars: \$50-\$70/teacher
- All day workshops in Toronto: \$250-\$500/day
- All weekend conference in Ontario: \$1,500
- Out of Province Conference: \$2,000-\$3,000
- Teacher Training: \$10,000

The value of lifelong learning cannot be understated. We are also committed to providing our families opportunities to learn more about child development. Experts in education and child psychology regularly provide our parent community, teachers and students with a greater understanding and knowledge.

## Financial Support

Although we are an independent school, we are not exclusive. One of our goals is to support a diverse population and to have our students remain in the school for their entire educational journey. This means supporting our families as best we can.

Ideally, Montessori schools in Ontario, like their counterparts in other provinces, would receive funding to help ensure as many students as possible could receive the benefits of a Montessori education. Until that time, we are committed to providing families who've demonstrated a



Our Westmount outdoor learning environment on Commissioners Road.



commitment to our school financial support to help them continue to receive high-quality Montessori education.

The Ann Marie Harding Financial Support Program is available to any family with children enrolled from second-year Casa through Junior High and has been enrolled at the Academy for at least two consecutive years.

Over the past five years our Financial Support program:

- Assisted 40 families
  - Of these 40 families, 15 received financial support for two or more consecutive years
- Provided \$401,909 in financial support
- Helped 65 students remain in the school

## Special Projects

Every few years, we identify needs that require immediate or special attention. Our Special Projects fundraising designation allows us to tackle such initiatives. In recent years, our Special Projects have included two outdoor learning environments – at our Oxford Street and Westmount locations.

---

### Our Values

*Respect*

*Independence*

*Creativity*

*Compassion*

*Community*

*Critical thinking*

*Global citizenship*

---

*Learn more about our fundraising efforts:*

[www.montessori.on.ca/Development](http://www.montessori.on.ca/Development)

# Why is Montessori so important?

Montessori Academy offers something unique and valuable to the London community: Choice. Specifically, high-quality Montessori education that puts the needs of the child first. Education that teaches children the value of being confident, compassionate and engaged citizens. Education that prepares children for life.

## We are helping to shape the next generation of leaders.

Montessori is an approach to education that mirrors the qualities that education advocates recite when they talk about what education *should* do...

- put the child's needs first
- have smaller class sizes
- encourage collaboration
- foster empathy and compassion
- prepare students for real life

Traditional Montessori provides an education that prepares children for the 21st century through a 100-year-old approach.

*"The shift in (education's) goal doesn't require years of research or armies of consultants or vast funding. It doesn't involve reinventing the wheel. Thousands of Montessori schools have been on this track for many years, with extraordinary results."*

– Steve Denning, "The Single Best Idea for Reforming K-12 Education," *Forbes Magazine*, September 2011

Unfortunately, it's getting harder to deliver quality Montessori without assistance from external funding sources.

Tuition alone supports close to 99% of our expenses, including our Three P's: programs, people and places. While our key problem is the same as conventional, publically funded education systems, our costs are not.

## Programs

Fundamental to Montessori are the materials and the "prepared environments," featuring specialized classroom material, which is expensive. Materials and programs support each child's social, emotional, intellectual and developmental needs.

**Why does it matter? Everything we do helps to prepare children for real life. Montessori students receive a well-rounded education**

that emphasizes practical skills, academics, and social responsibility, which gives them a solid understanding of the world around them – both locally and globally – and how they can make a difference in that world.

## People

Montessori Academy is known for its smaller teacher-student ratios, which are about 1-to-15 (versus 1-23 in the conventional classroom). On top of the larger number of teachers we have supporting our student body, these teachers require special training to become qualified Montessori teachers and continuing education to stay current and keep pace with our students' evolving needs. Our teaching team also includes experts in key subjects such as music, art, French and Phys Ed., who provide our students and well-rounded education. Special guest experts are regularly brought into the school to supplement our team of educators.

**Why does it matter? This world-class education is provided by highly trained professionals who are committed to Montessori and support a curriculum that promotes academic excellence and prepares children for the future – better than any other approach to education.**

## Places

To remain true to Dr. Montessori's approach to education, our classrooms look and feel different from "conventional" classrooms. Montessori Academy's "prepared environments" place emphasis on room to move, grouped tables and bright airy spaces. At our Westmount location on Commissioners Road and our locations near Waterloo and Piccadilly, our school features beautiful older buildings – most of which were built in the early 1900s.

**Why does it matter? These special "places" are dear to our hearts and provide the students a unique setting that reflects the Montessori tradition of respecting history and the value of honouring those who came before us.**



Junior High students now use Google Chromebooks thanks to generous donors.

---

*Our Vision is a community of confident, compassionate and engaged citizens who think globally, act responsibly and collaborate successfully to create a humane world.*

---

## Your gifts matter

The cost of doing business is increasing in all industries – and as we know from reading the news, education is no different. Without any government funding, Ontario's independent schools – and their commitment to providing the highest-quality education possible – are placed in an even more challenging position.

Historically, Montessori Academy of London's families have shouldered the costs for improvements to all areas of the school through tuition. Unfortunately, in this age of increased operational costs and regulations, we need help to continue to provide high-quality Montessori education in our community.

**Ultimately, we need the support of our families, the business community, foundations and other charitable organizations to address the growing gap between tuition and the expense of delivery high-quality, traditional Montessori education to families in and around London.**

Your gifts support something special/unique in the London area – true Montessori education: a 100-year-old approach to learning that is often praised as innovative and continues to be proven right by science.

*"IQ tests of children educated according to the Montessori method revealed they enjoyed a higher level of intelligence than the children educated according to the traditional method."*

Source: "The Impact of Montessori Teaching Method on IQ Levels of 5-Year-Old Children," Ahmadpour & Mujembari. *Procedia. Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Oct. 9, 2015.



**Students learn the value of community support starting in our youngest grades.**

But the success of Montessori encompasses so much more than fostering "smart kids." Time and again, we're told by local high-school teachers and community members that they can tell which students are from Montessori Academy. Our graduates embody independence yet are collaborative; they're self-aware and socially conscious.

These children will be the do-ers. They'll be the thinkers and innovators. They will lead the way in the future.

Your investment into our school helps to ensure future families have the option to provide their children something special – **an education that promotes academic excellence and prepares children and young adults to engage the world as active citizens and successful leaders.**

Help us inspire the world! Support Montessori Academy of London.

### Ways to give

- Donations – online at [www.montessori.on.ca](http://www.montessori.on.ca)
- Sponsorship – school-wide and special events such as our Art Expo, musical performances and fundraisers
- Gifts in Kind – team uniforms, classroom material, kitchen equipment, professional skills and services, etc.