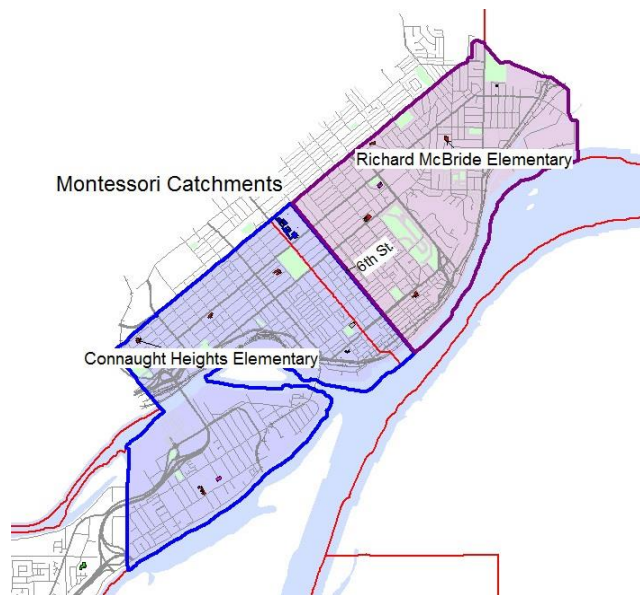## What is Montessori?

Montessori education is an approach to educating children that was first developed in the early 1900s by Dr. Maria Montessori, the first female doctor in Italy. She believed that children should choose developmentally appropriate activities in a stimulating environment of carefully selected and developed materials. Montessori education features multi-age classrooms, a special set of educational materials, student-chosen work in long time blocks, and individual and small group instruction in both academic and social skills. Research shows advantages for students in Montessori Programs on a variety of achievement measures and on social-emotional measures that indicate a sense of community, justice and fairness.

Students in our Montessori programs go on to learn successfully in our regular programs in the middle school years and at high school. Parental support for the program is high.

Montessori Programs in New Westminster

There are two Kindergarten to Grade 5 programs, one at Richard McBride School and one at Connaught Heights School. The catchment boundary between the two schools is 8th Street. Students carry on to their catchment middle school in the regular program.

How do I apply for my child to enter Montessori?

1) Register your child your child's regular catchment school for Kindergarten starting the second Monday of January.
2) Complete an application for your Montessori catchment school available on-line starting the third Monday of January (9 am).
3) Submit the application by the second Friday in February. An e-mail will be sent to all applicants confirming their application has been received by the third Friday of February. Parents should email programsofchoice@sd40.bc.ca if they have not received notification by the last Friday of February. Applications received within the district's established registration timelines will be grouped by priority category as outlined below;

Programs of Choice Priority Process:
1) Sibling preference is given to those families with a child already in the program in that particular school at the time the younger child enters the program;
2) Students who reside within the Program of Choice Catchment Boundaries;
3) Students whose residence falls within the New Westminster School District;
4) Students whose residence falls outside the New Westminster School District;
5) Students who applied after the Programs of Choice application date

4) A randomized, supervised draw process will be used to determine student placements conducted the last day of February. All other applicants would be placed on a waitlist.
5) All waitlists are dissolved September 30th each year.

When can children begin Montessori?

Some students begin Montessori programs before they begin school in pre-school. Some have had up to three years of Montessori experience, since the Montessori methods begin with three year old children. However, whether or not they have previous Montessori experience, most students in our schools enter at Kindergarten or grade 1.

It is possible to enter Montessori at any point up to grade 5, but at later grades a conversation occurs to ensure that parents understand the program and that the children are ready for a more independent and individually responsible way of learning. We want to ensure that the program is right for the child. After grade 5, students enter the regular program at their catchment middle school or Late French Immersion at École Glenbrook Middle School.

How do the students learn in Montessori?

Students study the same curriculum as the regular program, completing the British Columbia Ministry of Education's Learning Standards. However, students learn through the Montessori methods of working with carefully selected materials that demonstrate the concepts to be learned in a concrete way before moving to more abstract learning. Students choose the activities they will work on, covering all areas over time. In the classrooms, students learn individually, from each other and from the teacher. There are often large blocks of academic study time to explore and deepen learning. Please note that Montessori classrooms are usually combined two or three grade classrooms. It is one of the principles of Montessori education that children learn best in multi-age groups. The multi-age groupings allow children to be both the learner and the teacher at different times, building skills and confidence in their learning.

What are the benefits of a Montessori Education?

• Students work toward becoming independent learners who are deeply engaged in their learning
• Students are able to progress at a pace appropriate to their learning needs
• Students work towards developing positive social and community skills
• Students are able to make a smooth transition to regular program education.

What if Montessori isn't the right program for my child?

A new learning methodology requires patience—so sometimes we have to give the child a bit of time. There are support services for Montessori as for the regular program. A commitment to Montessori is a commitment for the school year, as there may not be room in the regular program to allow a transfer at any given point. However, if a student does need to move out of the Montessori program, it is better to make this adjustment at the beginning of a new school year. It's best to plan this with the teachers and principal. Be prepared however: the child may not do much better in the regular program.

For More Information:
• Contact Programs of Choice at programsofchoice@sd40.bc.ca

- The New Westminster Montessori Society at http://www.newwestmontessori.ca/
- Introductory information on line is at
    - o Michael Olaf: The Montessori Method http://www.michaelolaf.net/
    - o Montessori FAQ's http://www.montessori.edu/FAQ.html
    - o Montessori Education http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori_method