



# WEST OTTAWA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## What Every Montessori Parent Should Know

By Ami Taylor, Principal, Waukazoo Elementary School

One of the high points of my career as an educator has been to help parents make the best decision they can for their son or daughter's education. Being a parent myself, I know the stakes are high; our children only get one elementary experience, and we want it to be the best fit.

Here at Waukazoo, we have the opportunity to offer two outstanding programs: our K-5 traditional program and our Montessori program. I frequently get questions about what makes Montessori unique compared to the K-5 program. What makes it different? Below are some ways that Montessori differs from what others may have experienced in elementary school.

### Physical Activity



Children in the Montessori program physically move, and not just when they head down to the gym or go out on the playground. Part of the Montessori approach is to design hands-on activities and expose children to hands-on learning materials. This also takes place in our traditional K-5 programs but it may not be as frequent.



### Individual Learning Plans

One of the first things our students in Montessori do each week is build an individual work plan with a variety of activities designed to meet their personal learning needs. Our teachers guide the students in the development of their plan to ensure they are learning all of the language arts, math, science and social studies necessary for future success. Teachers work as facilitators of students learning, ensuring mastery of these concepts. They know when to step in to provide assistance as well as when to push students with more challenging material.

*Preparing Students to be College, Career and Life Ready!*



## Multi-Age Groupings

While we have a K level program, we also have grades one through three arranged in Lower Montessori and grades four and five organized in Upper Montessori, both in multi-age groupings. This gives our students a chance to give and receive mentorship from their peers, enhancing the community atmosphere of the overall program.



## What are the results?

Often we see self-directed learners emerging from the Montessori program. They are able to plan their work and work their plan in such a way that the learning is deep and the ownership is high. At the same time, we see great results from our students in the K-5 program as well, as children are challenged and motivated in a more structured environment.

## Is Montessori “better” than the K-5 program?



It really depends on the child because we have seen great results from both programs. For students who thrive in a more structured environment, the K-5 program might be a better fit. For students who desire less structure and more control over how they learn, Montessori may be a better fit. It really depends on the individual child and his or her needs.

**How can I learn more?** One of the best ways to learn more about our program is to schedule a visit to the program to see it in action or attend our open house in the spring (this year’s open house is March 3 from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.). You can also schedule an appointment with me to talk about your child’s needs specifically; I’d be happy to assist in this decision. Clearly, it’s an important one. Contact the Waukazoo main office at **616-786-1800** to learn more.