

Making The A-List At 50

Montessori Builds For The Future

Valley's First Montessori School Celebrates 50 Years With A \$7 Million Campus Expansion

Montessori School of Denver (MSD) is turning 50 years old and in honor of its birthday the school is adding a Middle School. Located on nearly seven acres on the corner of Holly and Florida, the nationally recognized independent school was the first Montessori School in Colorado to be accredited by the *American Montessori Society* (AMS) and the *Association of Colorado Independent Schools* (ACIS). The school now serves more than 300 students — toddler through seventh grade — with plans to expand to 340 students through the eighth grade.

To accommodate its new program, the school has launched a \$7 million campus improvement project. Phase I of the project began this past summer with the renovation and restoration of its Upper Elementary-Middle School building, a new Science & Innovation Tower plus new gardens, landscaping and a new second toddler classroom. The second part of Phase I is now under way with the start of a 10,000-square-foot Arts & Athletics Center, athletic field and a student-designed tree house. Phase II will follow and includes plans for a new Toddler-Primary building and Welcome Center as well as new and improved playgrounds. Phase II is expected to be completed within the next year.

For 50 years the school has held a place in the Valley's educational community as a model Montessori school offering 21st century education. Education here supports and nurtures a child's development in all areas: physical, intellectual and social-emotional. The foundation is built on de-

veloping the optimal learning environments for children, and that's just how the campus is being designed.

Joy Of Learning

Core principles of a Montessori education include *Individual learning*. Montessori education recognizes that each child learns at a different pace and it allows time in the classroom for that growth to take place with *Multi-age groupings of children within a classroom*. Multi-age groupings provide the necessary opportunities for older children to be role models for the younger students, both reinforcing their own learning and building self-esteem; plus an *emphasis on concrete learning first*.

A primary emphasis on concrete learning provides a firm foundation for abstraction later. Additionally the school has a *focus on the joy of learning and sense of discovery*. Montessori students are deeply interested in learning and understanding the work itself. When a child asks a question in a Montessori classroom, the teacher will guide the student in the right direction to discover the answer on his or her own.

Other key factors include a *carefully prepared classroom environment*. Classrooms are welcoming, child-centered, orderly, and stimulating and provide the structure for behavior expectations that are clear, predictable, and constant. *Self-correcting materials* are designed to allow students to get immediate feedback and correct mistakes on their own which leads to the development of critical thinking skills. *Schedules include large blocks of work time*. This allows students the time to problem solve, see the



Growth Curve: Montessori School of Denver has launched a \$7 million campus improvement project. On nearly seven acres on the corner of Holly and Florida the school is celebrating its 50th birthday.

interdisciplinary connections of knowledge, and to construct new ideas. Students develop concentration and grit — the ability to stay with a challenging task to achieve a goal necessary for life's success.

Can Do Attitude

Teachers are specially trained in the Montessori method. In addition to curriculum instruction and Montessori philosophy, teacher education includes child development, teaching strategies, observation, and leadership skills. Students are taught to recognize how they learn and are encouraged to become self-directed, independent thinkers who take active responsibility in their learning. By providing authentic, experiential learning opportunities, MSD engages students in real-world issues and allows them to interpret new information and to connect this information to prior knowledge. Service learning is highly emphasized and organically woven into their campus wide thematic studies.

Graduates attend various high schools throughout the Cherry Creek Valley including other independent schools, public, magnet and charter schools. They have

developed the skills and abilities to be creative problem solvers, to think reasonably, to be self-confident and flexible in thinking so that new solutions are possible. By having self-control as well as the discipline and perseverance grads can see something through to completion even when it is hard or seems impossible. Additionally they have learned to work independently and in groups.

Since students have been encouraged to make decisions from an early age, these young people are problem-solvers who can make choices and manage their time well. They have also been encouraged to exchange ideas and discuss their work freely with others. They have an "I can do it" attitude that will ensure future success in all aspects of life. Step onto Montessori School of Denver's campus and you'll feel the excitement, the energy, and the sense of wonder. This supportive and stimulating learning environment encourages students to achieve their own unique potential, to attain academic success, and take all the skills and confidence they gain to make a remarkable impact on the world. Information: 303-756-9441.