

Head
OF
School

STARTING JULY 2023

mrm
many rivers montessori

DULUTH, MINNESOTA

Triangle Associates and Many Rivers Montessori are pleased to announce an extraordinary school leadership opportunity as they recruit a next Head for the school.

Many Rivers Montessori (MRM) is a seven-year-old independent school in beautiful Duluth, Minnesota, on the north shore of Lake Superior. The school's story is one of clear vision, warmhearted collaboration, and demonstrated success.

MRM was founded by a broad community of educators and families seeking a high-quality, accredited Montessori independent school in Duluth. In its second year, MRM became the only school north of the St. Paul/Minneapolis area to receive Recognized status from the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). In its third year, it launched its middle school program.

In its fourth year, MRM became only the second school in Duluth to be accredited (provisionally with full accreditation anticipated this fall) by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS). And in its fifth year, MRM raised over \$1 million through a capital campaign to transform a historic school building into a beautiful, state-of-the-art facility. MRM's student body has grown steadily from 75 to 192 in its short history.

MRM aspires to become one of the best Montessori schools in the country while raising the bar for education in the entire region.



The School

MISSION AND VALUES

MRM's mission statement encapsulates the values on which the school was founded in 2014:

Many Rivers Montessori empowers our students to transform the world. Through world-class Montessori education, a focus on the whole child, and an inclusive and fun community, we cultivate independent, academically prepared, and socially responsible citizens who will be lifelong learners and creative problem solvers.

Central to MRM's identity and practice are the principles of Montessori, a 100-year-old pedagogy of progressive education founded on respect for the whole child. In Montessori, children are guided, as individuals, towards independence, love of learning, and a deep understanding of freedom and responsibility. Montessori children develop an ethos of care for their companions and shared environment. Inspired by Maria Montessori's belief in education for peace and justice, the school is committed to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

The school's commitment to Montessori values extends to the nurturing of a healthy organizational culture, in which children and adults learn to "disagree well". School is also fun: children look forward to going to school, and adults enjoy being in community together.



The School

CULTURE

MRM's mission and values are evident in the life of the school in multiple ways. MRM's staff are consummate professionals, showing up every day with their "A game". Its educators model Montessori values in their daily relationships with children and each other. The school's collaborative culture is seen in the task forces that bring staff and parents together to work on issues including facilities and Covid safety; the collegial relationship between Board and Head of School; and a culture of care among the staff. The Board of Trustees embodies the forward-looking, problem-solving spirit that characterized the school's founding.

A sense of fun imbues the community, which shows up with enthusiasm for school activities, including the annual "We Love Diverse Books" book fair and the much-anticipated (and hilarious) annual auction and talent show. During Covid, the community demonstrated MRM's ethos of care in an unprecedented way, with virtually every staff and family member investing great effort in keeping MRM open the entire 2020–2021 school year, making MRM one of the safest places to go to school in Duluth. Beyond the immediate school community, MRM children participate in service learning activities every month, and the school actively engages with local businesses and organizations for learning and social opportunities.

The school also exemplifies Duluth's outdoorsy culture. Students benefit from longer-than-typical recesses, and some age groups have two recesses daily. The Toddler and Children's House classrooms have attached outdoor spaces, and there are dedicated playscapes for each level. Older students hike regularly to nearby Hartley Park for outdoor classroom activities. The spacious fields and city playground outside the school are well used by Elementary and Middle School students.



During Covid, classes spent much time learning outdoors, even in winter — a practice likely to continue even after the pandemic passes.

ENROLLMENT, FINANCES, AND FACILITIES

In addition to the positive school culture listed above, MRM has enjoyed steady enrollment growth and remarkably low attrition. Annual surveys consistently show strong parent satisfaction. The school's success in keeping staff and students safe during the pandemic has significantly boosted its reputation.

Many Rivers Montessori, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, operates on an annual budget of \$2 million. The school is in solid financial shape, and well poised to increase revenue to meet the priorities of its next phase of development. The school's annual fund was \$35,000 in 2020–2021. Special events typically bring in another \$65,000. In 2018, the school successfully raised \$1 million — an audacious goal for so young an institution — to purchase and renovate a historic elementary school building. Major gifts total over \$250,000 over the past few years.

The new building enabled the creation of large, beautiful, purpose-built Montessori classrooms and outdoor spaces that have also provided the necessary space for distancing during the pandemic. For the 2021-2022 school year, MRM plans to add classroom space to accommodate its growing Upper Elementary and enhance its outdoor learning experiences.

The School

THE PROGRAM

Many Rivers Montessori strives to deliver an authentic AMI Montessori experience to its students. Its Toddler through Upper Elementary programs hold Recognized status from AMI. (No AMI Recognition status exists for the middle school age group.) The school has enjoyed remarkably stable lead teacher retention in the last seven years. Every lead guide (main teacher) holds an AMI diploma, as do two of the school's assistant teachers. Several of the school's assistant teachers and staff have received AMI assistant training. The school is committed to supporting qualified staff who wish to pursue AMI training, and ensuring access to AMI's annual Refresher Course for its faculty on a rotating basis. In addition, the school's Toddler and Children's House programs, and its childcare programs, are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.



THE TODDLER COMMUNITY

The Toddler Community (ages 16 through 35 months) is a nurturing and developmentally-responsive alternative to traditional childcare. "Help me to help myself" is the mantra of the

growing toddler, and the teachers closely observe each child in order to best meet this need. In a home-like, toddler-sized environment, children learn to take off and put on shoes; set a table; serve themselves; wipe up a spill; wash a dish. Interested in their work, they concentrate fully on a task. They learn to wait, and to demonstrate care for their peers. They discover the rich world of language, develop their motor skills, and make neurological connections for later academic work.



CHILDREN'S HOUSE

In the Children's House (ages 3 to 6 years old), a young child learns by absorbing experiences directly from their environment. In a child-sized environment with a full set of Montessori materials, children develop concentration and the preliminary skills for later academic work. Uninterrupted work cycles allow a child to independently repeat and reflect on a concept or task until they reach mastery. The children also receive daily lessons in grace and courtesy, and participate in caring for their environment. In the Montessori mixed-age community, the oldest children, in their Kindergarten year, become models and inspiration for the youngest, consolidating their own knowledge, self-confidence, and sense of responsibility.

The School

LOWER ELEMENTARY AND UPPER ELEMENTARY



Lower Elementary (1st through 3rd grade) and Upper Elementary (4th through 6th grade) students begin to make the transition from using materials to internalizing abstract concepts. The Elementary child is driven by natural curiosity, needing to figure out the interconnectedness of the world around them, and their place in the world. Each year, Elementary guides tell their students the Five Great Stories: stories of the Universe, the Coming of Life, Humans, Writing, and Numbers. With the Great Stories as a framework, small group academic lessons fill in the gaps to help the child make sense of the world around them. Maria Montessori believed that the way to restore order and harmony in the world was through education. Peace and justice, freedom and responsibility — these are consistent themes in the Elementary years. The AMI-trained guide serves as storyteller during lessons, inspiring the children to follow up on their interests and to explore connections between subjects. The same guide follows each child for a three-year cycle, becoming in tune with the unique personality and learning style of each child.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Middle School (7th and 8th grades) provides an intimate environment in which students are seen and known. Community is the watchword, as students learn to be accountable to one another, and figure out their role in their wider community. In writing about the middle school years, Maria Montessori called for students to engage in both hands-on and intellectual work. Through extended work times that support individualization, collaboration, and interdisciplinary study, students gain the necessary academic foundation required for success in high school. Students also run a “microeconomy” to raise funds for their annual spring trip, applying their academic lessons in a real-life setting. Each year, students participate in a fall retreat, and plan an extended 10-day spring trip. Middle school students graduate from MRM as well-rounded youth, ready for the rigor, opportunities, and pressures of high school.



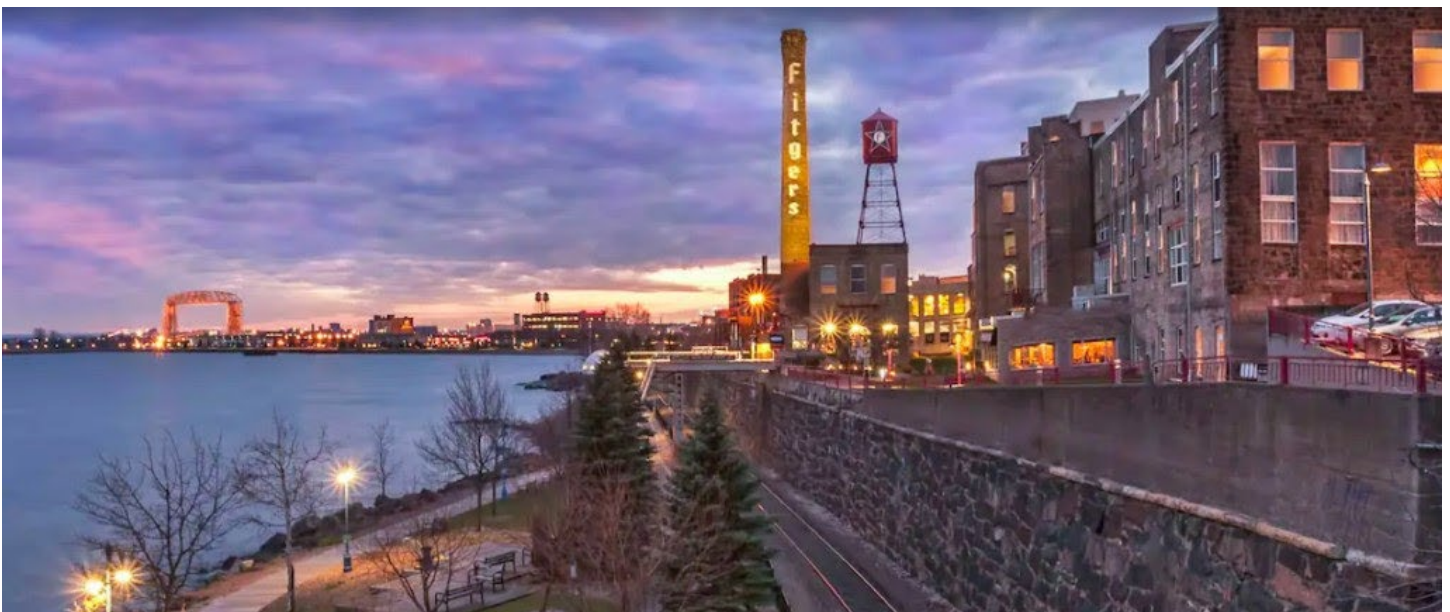
LANGUAGE, CHILDCARE, AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Spanish is integrated into MRM’s program across all age groups, with the Middle School program covering the equivalent of the first year of a high school curriculum in two years. The school offers before- and aftercare for Toddler through Upper Elementary, as well as during school breaks. Robotics and chess club are offered as after-school programs for older students, and MRM has been a host site for the Lake Superior Youth Chorus’ after-school choral program.

Duluth

The Duluth region is the second largest metropolitan area in Minnesota outside of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Voted *Outside* magazine's "Best Town in America" in 2014 and cited as a climate refuge in the New York Times, Duluth sits at the westernmost end of Lake Superior, the largest freshwater lake in the world. With a population of 90,000 (plus 26,000 in Superior, WI), Duluth is a major international port. Economic drivers include healthcare, education, aviation, technology, manufacturing, and tourism. With two major hospital systems,

three four-year colleges, and excellent schools, Duluth features urban sophistication in dining, shopping, arts, and entertainment, alongside stunning natural beauty. With almost 7,000 acres of parkland, 180 miles of wooded trails, and two local ski resorts, the area provides seemingly endless opportunity for outdoor recreation, and is a gateway to the north shore of Lake Superior and the vast Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. To learn more about this incredible place to call home: visitduluth.com and destinationduluth.org.



The Position

MRM will look to its new Head to passionately and effectively champion the merits of Montessori education; to further the school's values and priorities; and to collaboratively build and support structures, policies, procedures, finances, and marketing and recruitment strategies to enable it to thrive for years to come.

Founding Head of School Mark Niedermier, who with MRM's faculty and staff has overseen the school's remarkable growth, has announced his intention to retire from headship at the end of the 2022–2023 school year. The MRM Board of Trustees has launched a nationwide search for his successor to start in July 2023.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

These are the primary focus areas for MRM in the next three to five years:

- Educating local parents on the compelling merits of a Montessori education, as well as boosting Montessori literacy amongst current families. MRM is a “best kept secret” in the local community; it is a story waiting to be told to a wider audience.
- Providing educational leadership, reflecting the school's values, to a group of highly trained practitioners of Montessori pedagogy.
- Building out the school's administrative structure, including transitioning some key responsibilities from volunteers to staff, while increasing compensation to match benchmarks.
- Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in line with Montessori values of peace and justice, including: improving MRM's financial aid program; better supporting neurodiverse children; and helping students grow in cultural fluency.
- Energetically pursuing the school's core values and priorities while exercising stewardship of fiscal resources.
- Furthering a culture of philanthropy within the school community, and tapping new fundraising streams, including through alumni outreach and engagement with the wider community.
- Maintaining and further solidifying MRM's unique culture, including increasing the involvement of new generations of parents, as the children of the school's founders graduate from the school.
- Expanding MRM's after-school offerings beyond its core Montessori program.

The Position

RESPONSIBILITIES

As the president and CEO of MRM, the Head of School pursues the vision and executes the mission and strategic objectives of the school, nurtures the school's culture, manages faculty and staff, and ensures the institution's financial health. Essential duties and responsibilities include:

- Working in partnership with the Board of Trustees to manifest and refine MRM's mission and strategic priorities; articulating this mission to all constituents, including students, faculty and staff, parents, alumni, and the broader community; and embodying and representing this mission with all constituencies.
- Carrying out and reviewing established school policies with the Board of Trustees; keeping the Board informed on all aspects of the school's operation; representing the Board to faculty, staff, students, parents, and other constituencies.
- Providing general active management of the business of MRM, oversight over the course of study offered, and leadership in shaping the school's programs (academic and extracurricular).
- Supervising and providing responsible direction to administration and faculty to ensure that school policies are followed.
- Attracting, selecting, hiring, retaining, developing, and evaluating properly qualified faculty and staff, as well as terminating personnel when needed.
- Supervising the financial management, maintenance of the physical plant, strategic planning, and fundraising efforts of the school.
- Maintaining MRM's culture and quality of life, and providing a safe and respectful environment for learning.
- Ensuring that every element of school life reflects the principles of equity, justice, and the dignity of each individual.
- Communicating effectively with all constituencies, including students, faculty and staff, parents, and alumni.
- Representing with integrity his or her role within the broader network of schools and the community.
- Abiding by principles of good practice in all school operations — particularly admission, marketing, faculty recruitment, and fundraising.
- Serving as director for the school's licensed child care program, including providing staff with annual mandatory training requirements.
- Managing the school's relationships with AMI, ISACS, the National Association of Independent Schools, and the Minnesota Association of Independent Schools — including maintaining AMI Recognition status and accreditation with ISACS.
- Managing the admissions process with the support of the volunteer Admissions Director.

Other Duties:

These may include supervising overnight field trips, occasionally substituting in classrooms, and limited travel to meet with other heads, accreditation bodies, or for professional development.

Candidate Qualities

LEADERSHIP

- A leader of integrity who builds community and earns trust, and can also make tough decisions and stand by them.
- A facilitator and mentor who empowers staff, harnesses strengths, and encourages continued growth.
- A “roll up the sleeves” leader who is able to delegate appropriately, yet sees no task as too insignificant for themselves.
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy, and apply tactical skills needed to manage the systems and processes necessary to make it real.
- A commitment to bringing together and honoring multiple perspectives in order to maintain an authentic, inclusive, and diverse community.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- Excellent communication skills to inspire excitement in the value of a Montessori education, and compellingly tell MRM’s story in person, in writing, and via digital platforms.
- Nuanced understanding of the business and operations dimensions of an independent school, including finance, admissions, communications, development, and organizational structure.
- A commitment to and passion for progressive education, and, if not already trained, willingness to undergo Montessori training.
- Current knowledge of educational trends, and interest in the local and regional educational landscape.
- A growing understanding of systemic obstacles to diversity, equity, and inclusion, with a demonstrated commitment to fostering these values throughout the school’s policies and practices.

EXPERIENCE

- Proven success in senior administration and policy-setting in a Montessori school, independent school, or similar nonprofit educational institution.
- Experience with fiscal management, fundraising, and admissions in the above settings.
- A proven “nose for talent”: able to identify, hire, motivate, evaluate, and retain excellent faculty and staff.
- An experienced educator able to provide educational leadership to faculty.
- Experience in furthering equity, diversity, and inclusion values in the above settings.
- Experience working in a best-practices relationship with a Board of Trustees.

PERSONAL TRAITS

- A style that is collaborative, approachable, responsive and transparent, yet decisive and firm when necessary
- Eagerness to become a trusted member of the school community, to engage actively with employees, students, and parents, and to be visible in the day-to-day life of the school.
- A leader with demonstrated emotional intelligence.
- The confidence and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite discussion or disagreement, and welcome feedback.
- A compassionate and just advocate for the children, who makes them feel seen and supported.
- A skilled mediator.

Other Information

LOCATION WEBSITE EDUCATION

Duluth, Minnesota

manyrivermontessori.org

Bachelor's degree; AMI diploma and/or advanced degree preferred.

TO APPLY

Many Rivers Montessori has engaged Triangle Associates of St. Louis, MO to advise the school on its search. Interested candidates are invited to contact us for a preliminary phone conversation, and/or submit the following documents **via email attachments** to execsearch@manyrivermontessori.org:

- Cover letter addressed to the Search Committee expressing interest in and qualifications for the position.
- A current resume or CV.
- A statement of your educational philosophy (1-2 pages).
- Five references (including email addresses and telephone numbers) who can be contacted confidentially at the early stage of discovery.
- Three letters of reference.

The position will remain open until filled. Interested candidates are encouraged to submit their materials as soon as possible.

MANY RIVERS MONTESSORI AT A GLANCE

Founded: 2014
Enrollment: 192
Toddler: 14
Children's House: 80
Lower Elementary: 51
Upper Elementary: 35
Middle School: 12

Students of Color: 18%
Faculty and Staff: 37

TUITION
Toddler: \$12,428
Children's House: \$9,133
Lower Elementary: \$9,748
Upper Elementary: \$10,011
Middle School: \$12,475

Financial Aid: \$140,000 to 18% of students
Budget: \$1.9 million
Annual Fund & Special Events: \$90,000

Non-Discrimination Statement as to Employment

Many Rivers Montessori values diversity in every aspect of the school community. It is the policy of MRM not to discriminate in violation of the law on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in the administration of its hiring practices, personnel policies, or in any of its policies and procedures.