

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF ARLINGTON

Arlington, Texas

tmaonline.org

Start Date: August 2025



**Carney
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& ASSOCIATES

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Mission

To provide quality Montessori education to a diverse student population in partnership with parents.

Vision

To build TMA into a “great” Montessori learning community, sustainable and independent of any one person’s leadership, with impact beyond the school community to the local community and greater Montessori professional community.

Overview

The Montessori Academy of Arlington (TMA), located between Dallas and Ft. Worth, Texas, is a thriving school with over 190 students from infants/toddlers through 6th grade. On a wonderful campus built specifically for this school, children are outdoors every day, and are surrounded by nature including animals, led by Rufus the pig.

An exemplary AMS-accredited Montessori school (one of only a few in the area), TMA is also so unique in many ways. Their different-but-it-works fiscal approach, their passion for parent education; their unique approach to the school week in the elementary school, and the kind of diversity on campus that would be the envy of most schools...all make TMA one of a kind.

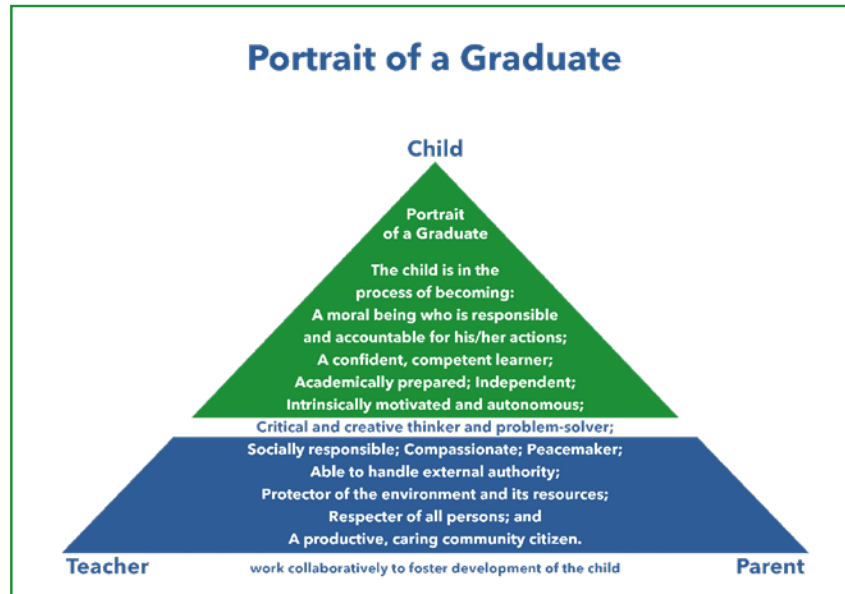
While technically not the founder, the 29-year head is retiring at the end of this school year. TMA seeks a visionary-but-also-hands-on new Head to start August 1, 2025. Of course, there is work to be done to achieve the school’s boundless ambitions of greatness, but TMA is set up better than most with a solid foundation for the future.

*“My kid comes home filthy and sweaty and talking about Math.
What could be better than that?”*

- TMA Elementary Parent

Strengths of the School

- The school is justifiably proud of many years of having been accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS) as well as Cognia. They walk the talk of being “real Montessori.”
- TMA graduates are well-prepared and successful wherever they go to middle school, especially in their character and so-called “21st century skills.”
- The Parent-School Partnership Agreement is a living roadmap for successful cooperation in support of children. The Parent-Teacher-Child Triangle (shown below) is referred to frequently and provides constant guidance.



- Parent education begins during the admissions process so parents really understand how the school approaches educating children, and continues with a rich menu of parent education activities throughout the year.
- Faculty are warm and caring and dedicated and well trained. The school invests in professional development for faculty including Montessori training and occasional conference attendance. Faculty appreciate the support and the freedom to do what they believe is in the best interests of their students.
- The school emphasizes and is proud of the diversity among both families and school staff. Approximately 2/3 of the students identify as people of color. TMA celebrates diversity with things such as international feasts and more. The diverse school community is described as “safe” by some people of color who chose TMA specifically because of its diversity.
- The campus is remarkable in many ways, including:
 - Each indoor classroom exemplifies the “Prepared environment” central to Montessori
 - Each indoor classroom has its own adjacent outdoor classroom, as well as ample playground, fields, and more.
 - The school has 5.5 acres of “Wildscape,” an undeveloped area of trees and bushes crisscrossed with hiking paths. Children are always with nature, right at school.
 - In addition to Rufus the pig (who is something of a celebrity), there are goats and chickens that the children help to care for.
 - While an unfortunate necessity, the school grounds are completely fenced with appropriate access control and similar security measures in place.
 - The school provides free-of-charge space for outside therapists whose ability to work with neurodiverse students on campus is a great logistical benefit to parents.
- The school has a strong learning support program for students who need it, in addition to welcoming outside therapists the parents may engage.



Highlights of Uniqueness at TMA

Every school is unique, but there are some things of particular note at TMA, including:

- Tuition is lower than at other schools, sometimes by as much as half. In addition, 27% of students receive some form of financial assistance. This is part of the school's commitment to access and affordability.
- The school does not do any significant annual fundraising, balancing the budget on tuition as the main revenue source.
- The elementary school, (they call it their Upper School) grades 1-6, has a unique schedule where Monday through Thursday are devoted to typical Montessori program/curricular studies. "Enrichment Friday" that is devoted to art, music, science, conflict resolution, Spanish, Latin, drama and more, highlights each week.
- TMA has codified much of its philosophies and practices in a number of pamphlets that are freely shared with others in the Montessori world.
- As noted elsewhere, parent education is so important at TMA that it has its own line item in the budget. The six page "Parent-School Partnership Agreement" spells out relationships and expectations with a clarity that is appreciated by all.

Challenges and Opportunities

Among the challenges and opportunities the new head will address are:

- While utilizing different approaches in age-appropriate ways, there is an opportunity to create more of a one-school feeling including both Early Childhood and Elementary programs. The work of re-creating the sense of one-school united by common goals, common values, trust and collegiality, is ongoing.
- The new head will have the opportunity to review leadership and administrative structures, as was recommended by the most recent AMS Accreditation visiting team.



- The school is about 13% underenrolled, especially in the elementary grades, where efforts to retain EC students and recruit new elementary students will help reach full enrollment.
- The school has, remarkably, achieved balanced budgets without fundraising. Some believe that creating a culture of philanthropy, which does not currently exist, could be an opportunity for program enhancements in the future.
- The faculty and staff in the school would appreciate greater clarity in roles and responsibilities, in expectations, and consistent accountability.
- Some have suggested that a more formalized HR function would help everyone understand HR policies, benefits details, etc.
- There is a desire for uniform, school-wide practices to quantitatively and qualitatively assess the effectiveness of the program and student progress, as well as provide guidance for continuous school improvement.
- While teacher freedom is valued and important, there is also a desire for greater consistency between and among classes, between divisions, in systems and approaches, and in communications.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

Among traits ideal in the next head are:

- Prior Montessori experience is ideal, but not required. If not Montessori-trained, the new head must have a personal belief in the progressive approaches embedded in Montessori, and be willing to undertake at least Montessori Administrative certification, as required by AMS Accreditation.
- The ideal candidate will be both an inspiring and visionary leader, as well as an experienced and capable day-to-day manager.
 - The Head sets the “tone at the top” and is able to inspire all with the excitement of the school, the positive student outcomes, and deep sense of caring that is foundational to the school.



- The new head must have the ability to refine the messages and deliver them both internally and externally as the school’s chief storyteller.
- Prior experience setting high expectations, motivating, supporting, and holding all accountable, is an important management attribute.
- Given that the lower school (infant/toddlers, EC) is the larger division in the school, prior experience with all aspects of early childhood education (including understanding parental anxieties), is desirable.
- The new head should be highly visible in the daily life of the school from the car line, to the classrooms, to events and activities.
- A personal commitment to all aspects of DEI and the importance of diversity in schools, including familiarity with neurodiverse students, is essential.
- A calm presence, deeply relational, skilled at conflict resolution, an inclusive decision maker who can also make difficult decisions when necessary.
- Familiar with student assessment practices and faculty evaluation practices.
- Financial literacy sufficient to partner with the Board and staff on annual budgeting.
- Familiarity with successful fundraising approaches in independent schools.
- *And finally*, especially following a 29-year head of school, it will be essential for the next head to first seek to understand what is central to TMA, engage appropriate stakeholders in making changes to keep the school moving forward, and be particularly skilled at balancing the pace and degree of change with the desire to retain the essence of what makes TMA unique.



Why The Montessori Academy?

We surveyed parents and asked them why they choose to keep their children at TMA. Here are the top ten reasons:

- Ten* As first time parents of a toddler, we know that we have a lot of learning to do. Our son's teachers are patient with us and help us learn right along with him.
- Nine* TMA families come from many different cultural backgrounds, which allows for optimum ethnic diversity. It is important to me to have my child experience and appreciate different cultures.
- Eight* TMA prepares children to be successful in life, not only for a standardized test.
- Seven* TMA fosters free thinking. My Kindergartener questions and reasons better than many adults and is rarely daunted.
- Six* My child is driven by a desire to learn, not the desire to get a good grade.
- Five* My little girl gets up in the morning and says, "Let's get to school early so I can finish more work."
- Four* My son, at 2, knew how to make a diamond and at 3, knew that a diamond was a parallelogram.
- Three* My 4 year old son and I had a conversation just the other day about surface tension. As a 5th grade public school teacher, I don't think my students could explain surface tension as well as he did.
- Two* At 5, my child brought me a crayon and suggested that I use it as a "peace stick" during my "conversation" with my husband.

And the number one reason

My 4th grader told me, "I hope that my kids will be able to go to a school like TMA. I want them to have the same opportunity that I have had to go to such a good school." Even at her young age, she knows what she is experiencing here is special.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about The Montessori School of Arlington.

[School Website](#)

[Montessori Education](#)

[Belief Statements](#)

[About Arlington, Texas](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultant in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- Statement of familiarity with and philosophy of progressive education, early childhood education and Montessori education;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

Skip Kotkins

Senior Consultant

skip.kotkins@carneysandoe.com



"Rufus"