

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Report to the
Board of Education

Lincoln Elementary
Montessori Proposal



October 17, 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	p. 2
Mission	p. 2
History	p. 2
Rationale	p. 3
Vision	p. 3
School and Community Input	p. 4
Philosophy/Research	p. 5
Curriculum	p. 5
Assessments	p. 7
Implementation/Choice	p. 8
Ten Steps to Montessori Implementation	p. 8
Steps to Lincoln Elementary Integration	p. 9
Resource Requirements Requests	p. 9
Accommodations for Students with Special Needs	p. 9
Conclusion	p. 9
Appendix	p.11

Denver Public Schools

Lincoln Elementary School

Redesign Plan – 2002

This proposal is submitted as a part of the Lincoln Elementary School community and the CDM's desires to address the academic needs of the neighborhood and community. Many hours have been spent completing the diligence necessary to effectively evaluate improvement choices that we need to make by reviewing the many educational models available to us. We have contacted and communicated with our community of parents and students in an effort to distill the needs and wants of the public we serve. We have pulled together a dedicated team to help realize our vision of a Lincoln Elementary School that provides innovative and enriching learning experiences with demonstrable results by the new inclusion of a Montessori approach, side by side with our established multi-age classrooms. This program change offers another choice in public schooling.

At Lincoln Elementary, we wish to effectively foster the desire to learn and fuel the love for knowledge. We wish to re-energize community support for public schooling in our area by addressing their needs directly, while meeting or exceeding the district goals.

Mission Statement

Lincoln Elementary School, a neighborhood school, can provide students and families with options of two innovative approaches to education that will enable students to meet academic standards in diverse settings of:

- 1) Lincoln multi age classrooms and vertical teaming. The Lincoln vertical teaming allows for flexibility in grouping of students and allows students of differing levels to work together on enrichment activities.
- 2) A Montessori program. Students in multi age settings are able to work at their ability levels rather than being classified based on age or grade. The Montessori approach to education will enable students to learn in a similar manner using the Montessori process of instruction.

History

Lincoln Elementary is a school of choice, located in West Washington Park neighborhood. Over the past ten years it has experienced a decrease in its student population. A shopping center west of the school eliminated many of the affordable houses that were in the Lincoln attendance area. Enrollment figures from 1994 –95 reflect the decrease, excluding the 1996-97 school year when there was an increase. 1994-95 – 255 students, 1995-96 – 253 students, 1997-98 – 263 students, 1998-99 – 223 students, 1999-2000 – 193 students, 2000-2001 – 168, 2001-2002 – 150. Many of the existing homes are priced in a range that is unaffordable for many young families who would move into the area. Many neighborhood parents have their children enrolled in private or magnet schools that are perceived to have a high rate of success such as Waldorf, St. Francis and Denison Montessori. This has also decreased the student enrollment at Lincoln.

Rationale

The Montessori model was selected for several reasons:

- ❖ Lincoln Elementary School is a wonderful educational structure that has the capacity to house a Montessori program and a Traditional Multi age program. (Appendix A)
- ❖ “Within the last five years many building renovations have enhanced the atmosphere of the structure. A playground master plan was designed by students from University of Colorado and two new playground areas and several landscape enhancements have been completed.
- ❖ Bond money has brought new life to the hundred year old building with the addition of new windows a complete cleaning of the outside bricks and mortar work done. Return fans have been installed in rooms to help with cooling, and heating, new stair treads and fire doors have also enhanced the appearance of the school.
- ❖ Parents residing in and around the Lincoln attendance area have expressed an interest in having a Montessori program at Lincoln Elementary.
- ❖ Research indicates that the Montessori model is a very successful program and has a high level of success academically as evidenced by the outstanding scores at Denison Montessori School in Southwest Denver.
- ❖ Montessori “magnet” public schools typically serve racially and socio-economically diverse populations in large urban school districts.
- ❖ Within the Denver Public Schools, Lincoln is an ideal setting to serve families who desire a Montessori model in the Southeast area of the district.
- ❖ The Washington Park Montessori School will be a feeder school to the Lincoln Montessori program. The Washington Park Montessori School provides instruction only through kindergarten. Students ready for first grade can enroll at Lincoln in the Elementary I program for six, seven, and eight year old students.
- ❖ Students will also be recruited from other Montessori primary programs in the area.
- ❖ By adding a Montessori model, student enrollment at Lincoln will increase by approximately 75 students over the next three years.
- ❖ The high level of parent participation expected will support academic and social success of the student population.

Vision

Within the next three years there would be an innovative school setting for students that will provide parents with choices of instructional models for their children. Lincoln would house both the traditional school that has multi age classrooms and vertical teaming and the Montessori Primary model that offers a multi age setting for children three, four and five years old. The Montessori model would expand in the second year to include the Lower Elementary 1 program that would accommodate the needs of students six years of age to eight years of age. In year three the Upper Elementary Montessori would begin to serve students from 9 - 12 years of age. The Lincoln multi age/vertical teams and Montessori staffs and parents would work collaboratively to meet the expectations of each program and to meet student needs. Both programs will benefit from enrichment and enhancements to the academic programs by sharing the library, computer lab, P.E., and music program. Both schools would address the district goals of setting

high expectations, improving the performance for all students, and closing the gap between better and poorer performing students.

Lincoln Elementary	Montessori
Early Childhood Education	Primary – Multi age 3,4,5 year olds
Kindergarten	Lower Elementary - Multi age 6, 7, 8
Grade 1	
Multi age 2/3, 3/4, 4/5	Upper Elementary - Multi age 9, 10, 11
Vertical Teaming	Vertical Teaming
Parent Involvement	Parent Involvement
Strong Problem Solving Math Program	Strong Problem Solving Math Program
Share resources to assist students identified with special education needs	Share resources to assist students identified with special education needs
Share resources - Music, P.E., Library	Share resources - Music, P.E., Library
Administer District Assessments	Administer Montessori and District Assessments

School and Community Input

- There has been a great deal of community support for the Montessori model at Lincoln.
- On January 24, 2002, and April 30, 2002 CDM forums were held. Surveys were distributed throughout the neighborhood and at the School Fair. Forty-nine families have indicated an interest in having their child attend the Montessori program. 78% of the Lincoln families expressed a desire to add a Montessori program at Lincoln.
- The Washington Park Montessori Preschool director and staff have offered support and assistance to this program being implemented at Lincoln.
- The Washington Park Montessori Preschool is not able to enroll all of the families wanting their children to learn in a Montessori model and has a waiting list. Denison Montessori also has a waiting list of parents with three and four year old students.
- Denison Montessori principal and staff have provided the Lincoln CDM and staff with information and assistance and feel that this program will meet the needs of many parents in Southeast community and the community at large.
- Community and political leaders have expressed support for the program at Lincoln.
 - Janelle Martin, Director, Washington Park Montessori
 - Shelly Bridges, Realtor and Resident of Washington Park area
 - Paul Ryan, Past President, West Washington Park Neighborhood Association
 - State Senator Doug Linkhart, Washington Park resident
 - Councilwoman, Kathleen MacKenzie - agreeable to exploring the concept
 - JoAnn Trujillo Hayes, Principal, Maria Sandoval Montessori School
 - Martha Urioste, Principal, Denison Montessori School
 - Beth Hamilton, Denison Montessori Coordinator
 - Lincoln CDM Committee
 - Support from the S.E. Area Superintendents, Dr. Irene Jordan and Beth Biggs
 - President Denver Public Schools Board of Education Elaine Gantz Berman, and Board member Sue Edwards – have expressed interest
 - Community Relations, Ba Vovan – Supports school plans

(Appendix B)

Philosophy/Research Findings

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. He/she must do it by him or herself or it will never be done. A truly educated individual

continues learning long after the hours and years he or she spends in the classroom, because that person is motivated from within by natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt therefore, that the goal of childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

The Montessori program has three levels: Primary (ages 3 – 6), Lower Elementary I (ages 6 – 8), and Upper Elementary II (ages 9-11).

Research studies indicate that children of both low and middle socioeconomic levels benefit from Montessori education in the short and long term.

Dr. Mary Boehrlein, "Montessori Research:
Analysis in Retrospect," The NAMTA Journal, Vol.
13, No. 3, Summer 1988.

A survey by the North American Montessori Teachers' Association indicates that suburban and urban integration has also been highly successful with Montessori programs.

A recent article in the Denver Post, reflects the success of the Denison Montessori program which has been in operation since 1985.

(Appendix C)

Curriculum

Montessori Developmental Continuum (Text from Montessori Public School Consortium)

"Montessori curriculum is a flow experience; it builds on the continuing self-construction of the child – daily, weekly, yearly – for the duration of the program. Montessori Preschool Program (ages three to six).

In the Montessori environment, independent activity constitutes about eighty percent of the work, and teacher directed activity comprises the remaining twenty percent of the work at all levels.

The Montessori classroom is a 'living room' for children. Children choose their work from among the self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves, and they work in specific work areas. Over a period of time the children develop into a normalized community working with high concentration and few interruptions. Normalization is the process whereby a child moves from being undisciplined to self-disciplined, from disordered to ordered, from distracted to focused, through work in the environment. The process occurs through repeated work with materials that captivate the child's attention. For some children this 'inner change' may take place quite suddenly, leading to deep concentration. In the Montessori preschool, academic competency is a means to an end and the manipulatives are viewed as 'materials for development.'

In the Montessori preschool, five distinct areas constitute the prepared environment:

- *Practical life* enhances the development of task organization and cognitive order through care of self, care of the environment, exercises of grace and courtesy, and coordination of physical movement.
- *Sensorial* enables the child to order, classify, and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, color, etc.
- Mathematics makes use of manipulative materials to enable the child to internalize concepts of number symbol, sequence, operations, and memorization of basic facts.
- *Language arts* includes oral language development, written expression, reading, the study of grammar, creative dramatics, and children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters, alphabet cut-outs, and various presentations allowing children to link sounds and letter symbols effortlessly and to express their thoughts through writing.
- *Cultural* exposes the child to basics in geography, history, and life sciences. Music, art, and movement education are part of the integrated cultural curriculum.

The *prepared environment* unifies the psycho-social, physical, and academic functioning of the child. The important task of schools is to provide students with an early and general foundation that will enable them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career (Ana Maria Villegas, 'Two Sample Case Studies,' in *Implementing Montessori in the Public Sector*, North American Montessori Teachers' Association, Cleveland, 1990). The academic preparedness or foundation consists of ten variables identified by Villegas: positive attitude toward school, inner security and sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, a habit of initiative and persistence, ability to make decisions, a sense of independence and self-confidence, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community.

Montessori Elementary Program

(ages six to twelve)

The elementary program offers a continuum built on the preschool experience. The environment reflects a new stage of development and offers the following:

- ❖ Integration of the arts, sciences, geography, history, and language that evokes the native imagination and abstraction of the elementary child.
- ❖ Presentation of knowledge as part of a large-scale narrative that unfolds the origins of the earth, life, human communities, empires, and modern history, always in the context of the wholeness of life.
- ❖ Presentation of formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc., that exposes the child to accurate, organized information and respects the child's intelligence and interests.
- ❖ Use of timelines, pictures, charts, and other visual aids that provide a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of each discipline.
- ❖ Mathematics curriculum presented with concrete materials that simultaneously reveal arithmetic, geometric, and algebraic correlations.

- ❖ Montessori-trained adults who are enlightened generalists (teachers who are able to integrate the teaching of all subjects, not as isolated disciplines, but as part of a whole intellectual tradition).
- ❖ Emphasis on open-ended research and in-depth study using primary and secondary sources (no textbooks or worksheets) as well as other materials.
- ❖ Going out to make use of community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom.

As in the preschool, the Montessori materials are a means to an end. They are intended to evoke the imagination, to aid abstraction, to generate a world view about the human task and purpose. The child works within a philosophical system asking questions about the origins of the universe, people and their differences, and so on. On a factual basis, interdisciplinary studies combine geological, biological, and anthropological science in the study of natural history and world ecology.

The program is made up of connective narratives which provide an inspiring overview as the organizing, integrating *great lessons*. Great lessons span the history of the universe from the “big bang” theory, the origin of the solar system, earth, and life forms to the emergence of human cultures and the rise of civilization. Aided by impressionistic charts and timelines, the child’s study of detail in reference to the great lessons leads to awe and respect for the totality of knowledge.

Studies are integrated not only in terms of subject matter, but in terms of moral learning resulting in appreciation and respect for life, a fundamental belief in progress and the contribution of the individual, moral empathy, the universality of the human condition, and the meaning of true justice.¹

Assessments

Student progress is assessed by a number of instruments including: (The first four are Montessori requirements)

- ❖ Quantitative norm referencing
- ❖ Criterion – referenced evaluation
- ❖ Qualitative evaluation – includes rating forms, checklists, and narrative descriptions.
- ❖ Ethnographic inquiry – time on task, independence, self-motivation, and responsibility.
- ❖ DPS District Assessments

Implementation

The Lincoln Montessori primary program would begin in year one with one classroom, the Primary class, consisting of three, four and five year old children. The three and four year old students would attend school for a half day only. The five year old students would attend all day. Year two would require one more classroom for the Elementary I class. It would be for six, seven and eight year olds. **At the primary level, the**

¹ "Why the Montessori Education Model?", Montessori Public School Consortium, Pages 1-17

Montessori program requires parents to financially support the cost of Montessori trained teachers and paraprofessional assistants.

Choice Process:

Students will be enrolled through the District Choice process. Primary students will be enrolled based on the district application process.

The Lincoln Montessori program tuition plan will follow the district choice lottery similar to the ones used at Dennison Elementary School and Maria Sandoval Montessori schools. This fee structure reflects: 60% will pay full fee, 25% will pay a partial fee, and 15% will pay a scholarship fee. When children are five years old, they will attend Lincoln for a full day and parents will pay \$250 per month for the extended day.

(Appendix D)

Ten Steps to Montessori Implementation

- 1) Begin the Montessori program with three, four and five year old students.
- 2) Build the program by adding one or two additional classrooms the next year.
- 3) Provide accredited Montessori-trained teachers and quality paraprofessional assistants.
- 4) Use multi-age groupings: primary (ages 3 – 6); lower elementary I (ages 6 – 8); Upper elementary II (ages 9-12)
- 5) Purchase Montessori materials for each classroom.
- 6) Hire a Montessori coordinator/ consultant with Montessori curriculum knowledge and training.
- 7) Build consensus among the staff regarding curriculum goals in relation to pupil progress.
- 8) Use Montessori specific progress reporting mechanisms for students enrolled in the Montessori program.
- 9) Involve parents and community as outlined in the Lincoln School Improvement Plan.
- 10) Align assessment techniques with Montessori curriculum

Steps to Lincoln Elementary Integration

Because it is important to us at Lincoln to continue to have a dedicated teaching staff and community of students and parents, we feel that it is important to take a few extra steps to ensure the successful integration of the new Montessori program into the existing culture of the school.

- 1) Montessori overview and orientation for existing faculty.
 - a. This is an opportunity for existing faculty to receive a brief introduction to the Montessori method as it will exist within the school and for existing faculty to ask questions in an effort to gain better understanding of how the

program will compliment the existing learning methodologies. This is also an opportunity for the faculty to build a sense of community among themselves and establish linkage to fortify the whole of what Lincoln is providing to the community.

- 2) Alignment and marriage of additional resources.
 - a. Because Lincoln has resources that the Montessori program can utilize, we would provide an opportunity for the faculty who manage these resources to work with the Montessorians in bridging these resources to meet each programs needs effectively and efficiently.
- *****

Resource Requirements Requests

Montessori Trained Staff

Montessori Materials (Start Up Materials)

District Accounting Assistance

The phase in of the Montessori program as proposed would be self sufficient after four years.

(Appendix E)

Other Sources of Funding

Tuition for three and four year olds

Tuition for extended day five year olds

Colorado Preschool Project

Grant Funding

Fund Raisers/Donations

Accommodations for Students with Special Needs

In accordance with existing policies, Denver Public Schools Student Services Department will be asked to provide support allocations for three, four and five year olds with special needs.

Conclusion

1. The Montessori model combined with the Lincoln multi – age/vertical teaming program will provide choices for parents and increase the efficiency and capacity of Lincoln Elementary School.
2. It will strengthen the neighborhood community and foster a cultural, linguistic and economic model that complements the District mission by:
 - Setting High Expectations – For Students, Parents, Teachers, Principals, and all other Staff of DPS and the Community it serves.
 - Improving the Performance of all students
 - Closing the Gap Between Better and Poorer Performing Students
3. “Montessori magnet schools have a track record of having accomplished the goals of desegregation, parental choice, and student achievement. They typically rank in the upper one-third of the schools in their district on achievement test scores, and they usually reflect the ethnic and racial makeup of their communities.”

-Northwest Regional Laboratories-

-Duax, T. (1989). Preliminary report on the educational effectiveness of a Montessori school in the public sector. The NAMTA Journal, (14)2, 56-62.-

4. This proposal reflects the goals, objectives and strategies as outlined in the Lincoln School Improvement Plan - to increase student achievement, student enrollment and parent involvement within the next three years.
5. The proposed model provides a different structure of education that is continuous over a nine year period and insures stability of the student population and reduces mobility.
6. The nine year human growth and development model that begins at age three, sets the stage for reading by the age of five and ensures a high level of academic success by the age of twelve.

APPENDIX

- A) Floor Plan - Phase In Model**
- B) Forums, Surveys, Letters of Support**
- C) Copy of Article about Denison Montessori**
- D) Application/Tuition Plan**
- E) Budget (4 years)**

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