

Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16



Principal: Nancy Radkiewicz

Governing Council Chair: Deb Korth

MMCI President: Melissa Najera

January 2017



"Montessori is an education for independence, preparing not just for school but for life."
- Dr. M. Montessori

A Letter to the Board



Dear Members of the FCPS Board of Education,

Fifteen years ago, when Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School was created, Frederick County Public Schools opened the door to a dynamic alternative method of learning for students in grades PreK-8th. Stepping into a relatively new initiative (Schools of Choice) in education, our founding parents and the Board of Education forged ahead with a solid plan and vision despite a lack of existing Maryland charter school law. Their determination has been the cornerstone of our work at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School.

We serve 300 amazing students from age 3 through 8th grade. We are completely tuition-free, have no special entrance requirements, and maintain authentic Montessori Principles in mixed-age classrooms.

In addition to academic success, our core values, Peace Curriculum and commitment to community set us apart from other schools. And, as evidenced by a waitlist of over 1100 students, our program continues to provide a desired alternative within the public school system. With the support of our parents in governance and as volunteers, we are honored to serve the children and families of Frederick County and share this report with you as evidence of our progress.

Nancy Radkiewicz, Principal

Melissa Najera, MMCI President

Deb Korth, GC Chair

About this Report:

The following report is being submitted in conjunction with the 2015-16 Annual Report Chart to complete the Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (MVMPCS) 2015-16 Annual Report to the FCPS Board of Education. In it, we expand on items addressed in the Annual Report Chart that benefit from greater detail, such as: our school's notable accomplishments, performance targets and testing highlights, professional development and collaboration activities, and academic growth initiatives.



"In observing that children are not empty vessels to be filled with adult-determined knowledge, she (Montessori) mapped an educational landscape that Montessori educators have been refining and codifying for more than a century.

As the era of NCLB draws to a close, a growing chorus of researchers, reformers and leaders is expressing resounding agreement on what success actually entails: It is indicated by executive functions, such as inhibition and cognitive flexibility, and by social skills such as collaboration and leadership. To build these skills, school needs to be personalized, hands-on, and deeply engaging to students. It should prepare students not just to pass tests, but to participate in an increasingly complex social, political and economic world, a world in which creativity and innovation are necessary not just for economic participation, but for human flourishing." --Jacqueline Cossentino, Director for the National, Center for Montessori in the Public Schools

Notable Accomplishments



LOTTERY LIST: Our list of potential students whose families signed them up for our Lottery, included 1181 names. This was the largest number of students seeking entry to our school. Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School averages about 30 spots opening each year, with the majority of those at the Primary level.

TEACHER RETENTION: Last year (15-16) we had one Middle School Language Arts teacher extend her leave of absence and we hired a transfer from FCPS, as a Lower Elementary Montessori teacher. This teacher began her Montessori Certification classes in June of 2015, spending the entire summer at training! Her AMS Certificate was completed in the summer of 2016.

AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY: Last year we enrolled as an Initiate Member School with the American Montessori Society. We also took part in the National Charter School week in January, 2016. Our Principal attended the National Charter School Conference, in New Orleans, compliments of MSDE.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: We adopted DIBELS, a nationally recognized Reading Assessment to be administered three times a year to first, second and third graders. We formed a consistent team to give the tests, record the results and report them to the lead classroom teachers. From this effort we were able to improve Global Scholar Reading scores by 35%.

DYNAMIC ARTS AT MVMPCS: We continue to be proud of our amazing arts programming. During the school year there were two musical productions which included actors from third through eighth grade. The students also worked behind the scenes running the scenery, sound, lights, costumes and props. Our Art teacher held the second Annual Children's Art Show with a piece of art from every child in kindergarten through eighth grades. This event raised \$400 for the art program.

VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT: Our parents take an active role in our school. In this school year we were recognized by FCPS for the remarkable 9,000 hours our volunteers recorded. Parents work in the library, listen to children read, attend Governing Council meetings, serve on committees and they even helped our students walk to the Curious Iguana Book Store for a Book Fair.

GARDENS ABOUND: Even though we are located 2 blocks from Market Street; parent volunteers joined students in preparing gardens on our property. By May, we had received a grant from MSDE for \$500 specifically for a garden. Families signed up to water the gardens over the summer and we returned to squash, watermelons, tomatoes, peppers, carrots and lettuce. What an exciting way for the classes to return to school and reap the fruits of their labor!



Students breaking ground in MVM new urban garden.



Testing Highlights



PARCC SCORES

READING



MVM 6th graders were **#1 in FCPS, in English/Reading.**

96.4% scored a 3, 4 or 5 on the PARCC (also #1 in 4/5 scores).

MVM 7th graders were **#1 in FCPS, in English/Reading**

100% scored a 3, 4 or 5 on the PARCC (also #1 in 4/5 scores).

MVM 8th graders tied for #1 in FCPS in English/Reading

100% scored a 3, 4 or 5 on the PARCC (also #1 in 4/5 scores).

86.8% of all grades that took the PARCC at MVMPCS (3rd – 8th) scored a 3, 4, 5 on the PARCC making our school #7 in FCPS in English/Reading (compare to 74.6% for FCPS).

A notable improvement since 2015, the first year of the PARCC test, when MVMPCS (3rd - 8th) scored 84.1% at a 3, 4 or 5 making us #12 in FCPS.

MATH



MVM 6th, 7th and 8th graders came **in #2 in FCPS for Math**

89.1% of our students scored 3,4 or 5.

We were also 2nd in the County in Math for 6th,7th, and 8th grade in 2015.

We are taking an intense look at our 3rd, 4th and 5th grade math. See “Academic Growth Initiatives: Mathematics” section.

MSA SCORES

SCIENCE

MVM 8th graders scored **96.0% proficient or advanced.**

All FCPS eighth graders scored 76.7% proficient or advanced.

Without science textbooks or a science lab, MVM students excel in the sciences!



Performance Targets



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT TARGETS 2015-16

Local Assessments

- School-wide measures for student achievement in ELA and Math were determined as a result of the Global Scholar scores.
- To monitor students' progress throughout the school year, we administered the Global Scholar to students scoring in the bottom quartile in the area of ELA, three times. Other students (except for 5th and 8th grades) received the assessment twice a year.
- We gave the DIBELS to 2nd and 3rd grade students scoring in the lowest quartile in ELA on the Global Scholar.
- We designed a schoolwide writing prompt for all students, K-8th to form a Benchmark that we could compare to in future years.

PARCC:

At least 70% of all students and student groups will meet or exceed proficiency standards in each assessed area on the 2015-2016 PARCC Assessment. Since this was the second year we administered the PARCC, we aimed for scores of 3, 4 or 5 in ELA and Math.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Research-based, Timely):

We will improve 7% of our disaggregate students in grades 2-8 who are scoring in the Low and Below Average ranges, as noted in the Global Scholar results for the 15-16 Spring test in Reading. Global Scholar data will define student performance in the disaggregate categories of our population. A schoolwide Narrative Writing Prompt, using FCPS rubrics, will be administered by classroom teachers and scored during the second Semester as a learning tool for students and staff. This will provide us with a baseline in writing for grades K-8.



SCHOOL CULTURE TARGETS

Student Body

- The in-school and out-of-school suspension rates for all students and student groups will be 3% or less by the end of the 2015-2016 school year.
- The attendance rate for all students and student groups will be 96% or greater by the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

Professional Practice Strategies for Principal SLO

- All Lower EL staff were trained in DIBELS
- Reviewed and updated our SST format
- We incorporated MRX as an online recording system for Montessori lessons given.



SCHOOL CLIMATE TARGETS

- Based on 2015-16 Survey Results we made “becoming one school” an important focus for the year.
- We involved parents in community events and facilitated teachers visiting other classrooms.

Academic Growth Initiatives



Our goal is to build a dynamic and unified community of learners who excel in their achievement through the use of Montessori Curriculum that is aligned to Common Core Standards. MVMPCS continually strives to exceed performance standards in FCPS, and our initial PARCC data is evidence that the majority of our students are well prepared to be successful in their academics.

We recognize, however, that there are still areas for improvement and students who may need additional support to achieve their personal best. To this end, we have been implementing a multi-pronged approach to guide students who are not currently meeting their targets.



LANGUAGE 2015-16

School Goal: To improve the reading scores for students in the disaggregate groupings by 7% on Global Scholar

DIBELS

- We formed a DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) team to administer the assessment in the fall to all students in the lowest quartile. The team then shared the results with the classroom teachers, suggesting objectives that needed improvement.
- Teachers made Reading their SLO Goal and worked with students in the disaggregate groups up to 4 times a week. They reported results once a month to principal.
- The DIBELS team also tested any first graders that teachers were concerned about and did the same follow up with the teachers.
- Sight words were taught to students and sent home for additional practice with parents.
- DIBELS also has one minute reads and decoding practice that classroom teachers were free to use with their struggling readers.
- The principal trained teachers in DIBELS to support its continued use.
- We gave the test 2 more times during the year so that teachers and students could see the improvement.
- After the final (Spring) Global Scholar test, we had decreased the number of students in the lowest quartile by 35%.

Schoolwide Writing Prompt

New to Monocacy Valley Montessori, all students in grades K-8th receive the same writing prompt. While each year, this prompt will change, last year used a photograph which left the interpretation up to the child. The results were positive as teachers discussed the results and planned ways to enhance their instruction of writing.



Our goals were multifaceted:

1. To provide teachers with narrative writing examples at all levels in order for them to see the progression;
2. To encourage teachers at each level to discuss the FCPS writing rubrics that provided the most benefit for their students use;
3. To return to the student writing samples and score them for a benchmark to be referred to in later years with the expectation that students will grow as writers over time.

Academic Growth Initiatives Cont'd



MATHEMATICS 2016-17

Implementing Change to Improve Math Skills: A Two-Year Plan

INTERNAL GOAL:

In two years, 80% of our students will be performing at or above the 75% nationally in both math and reading.

This model, called RTI, allows us to provide Tier I and Tier II interventions to the quartile of the student population who are not performing above the 75%.

- Tier I intervention is small group instruction for a short, intense period of time (20 minutes every day for 6 weeks) that we provide to students performing between the 40% and 75% nationally.
- Tier II intervention is ongoing support provided on a weekly basis, usually by our Special Education staff.

METHOD

We are supporting our Lower El and Upper El teachers to introduce concepts and progress towards mastery before moving children off the Montessori materials.

The Montessori Method moves students from concrete materials (hands on manipulatives) to abstraction (work on paper). In some cases, students have been moved off the materials too early, in an attempt to boost standardized math scores in the younger grades, which in turn, impacts their ability to succeed in the higher grades.

Studying Our Data

We continue to study our Global Scholar and PARCC data, pulling out skills that students have not mastered, and the data has shown us a lot in the last year.

A few key skills that we are working on across all grade levels include:

- Math Vocabulary - unfamiliar problem solving terms are keeping our students from understanding what the test program is asking them to actually do. We are working to boost standardized Math Vocabulary across all levels.
- Math Facts are not automatic in the upper grades. We are working with Primary and Lower Elementary classrooms to make sure 80% of the student body enters 4th grade knowing all their addition, subtraction, and multiplication fast facts backwards and forwards. We will continue to work towards this goal in the coming year.
- In the Upper Elementary program, students are being exposed to more complex algebra, decimal, fraction, and graphing work. We are teaching more data analysis skills across all of our Upper Elementary classrooms. We hope this explicit instruction will help students make marked progress on their annual standardized exams.



Montessori Math materials at work in Lower Elementary.

Academic Growth Initiatives Cont'd



Staffing

To support these achievement goals and the Montessori program overall, we have continued to hire for excellence.

- A Montessori Specialist was hired in Summer 2016.
- We recently hired a highly talented Math Interventionist, who will start working with small groups of students in February 2017.

Training/Professional Development

A key element of success is to ensure that our staff is fully engaged and supported via professional development.

- Our Montessori Teacher Specialist continues to model Math lessons in the Lower El and Upper El classrooms.
- We are also working with math experts in the field to train and support our teachers, in order for them to move to the next level in their math instruction. Joan Cotter, PHD will be here on Tuesday, February 21st working with the staff all day to roll out a new Montessori based curriculum called Right Start Math. After this all day professional development opportunity, we will purchase the necessary materials, and teachers will roll out the complete program in the fall of 2017.
- A number of lead teachers took part in an evening webinar to boost their understanding of the full scope and sequence of the Montessori math materials Primary through Middle School.
- Finally, we are working on implementing a Number Talks program, starting with mental math and computation strategies in Lower Elementary and fractions, decimals, and percentages in Upper Elementary.

This professional development work will continue over the next 2 years.



8th Graders escort preK students during the International Peace Day ribbon ceremony.

Professional Development



2015-16

| Training | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| Team Building off- site Upward Enterprises | Divided into random groups. Ropes course at the end | ½ day |
| Montessori Assistant Teacher Training | One full day of Expectations for IAs | Hand-outs |
| How Do You Explain MVMPCS? | One min. elevator speech | 2 Fridays |
| MRX- Montessori Records Express | All staff - online program- Reading Focus: all teachers received a Chrome Book | 4 Fridays and one half day |
| Disaggregate groups in Reading | Shared MVMPCS data. Biggest concern for FARM students | 1 Friday afternoon |
| Building Understanding at MVMPCS | Teacher cross dialogues – twice Reflection form completed by each teacher | 2 Friday afternoons |
| SLO - Student Learning Outcomes | Focus on school goal of decreasing the number of students scoring in the lowest quartile on Global Scholar | 1 Friday afternoon |
| CSI - Continuous School Improvement | Shared first with leadership team, then with staff, then with GC | 1 Friday afternoon |
| DIBELS | Introduced DIBELS to Lower El teachers, shared the free resources | 2 hours with Lower El |
| Technology Training | Google Classroom by FCPS expert and Christine Carey - 2 sessions | 2 Friday afternoons |
| Schoolwide Writing Prompt | 3 sessions. Introduce, explain. Then teacher do and return, evaluate the results. Then score student writing and turn in to NR. | 3 Friday afternoons |
| Global Scholar | Introduce the resources available in GS; then work with an example and design Montessori lessons to help that child. | 2 Friday afternoons |
| Mindfulness | Shared training from FCPS Later designed a display board for students to study | 1 Friday afternoon |
| Cyberbullying | Shared resource from FCPS Cindy E. & Christine Created toolbox for use by teachers. | 1 Friday afternoon |
| PARCC Prep | Official training for PARCC assessments; and shared previous test results | 1 Friday afternoon |
| PARCC Results | Studied the results of the first PARCC and looked at % of standards mastered by grade levels | 1 Friday afternoon |

Professional Collaboration



Rowing in the Same Direction...

Surveying the Staff

At the end of the 2014-15 school year, an informal survey of staff and a review of the MVMPCS Report Cards being used showed that we would benefit from a greater understanding of the instructional cohesion and the collegiality necessary to be an outstanding school.

Setting Goals

Our goal for the 2015-16 school year was focused on 'One School, One Team'. The various Professional Development sessions below were specifically directed toward aligning our school.

Following Our Strategic Plan

The review and abridgement of the Strategic Plan had begun in the previous school year. The Strategic Planning Committee included parents (new and old) and staff who were tasked with pinpointing the intent of each of the five goals of our Strategic Plan. The most obvious goal, being an authentic Montessori school, became the number one goal.

Montessori education has many moving parts and requires teachers to have effective systems in place to address the multiple needs of an array of students in multi-age classrooms. At the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, most teachers (60%) had been at MVMPCS for well over eight school years and had their systems in place. We began this school year (15-16) with the intent to 'open the eyes to others' by showing the similarities and differences between the four levels we serve. We wanted to build understanding between classrooms.

Shared Decision-Making

Unlike any previous year, we held afternoon dialogues about students who were transitioning to the next level. Teachers met across levels and shared valuable information about these students. Parents had already classrooms and shared their hopes and insights. Final decisions were made by the principal, but this process enabled the participation of all stakeholders.

Training With Purpose

Along with this new direction, we trained staff in Google Docs, Cyberbullying, MRX (online record keeping of Montessori lessons) and Reaching the ADHD Student. We helped teachers determine their SLO goals and monitored their successes. All were important trainings addressing real-life needs and issues in our community. We called on staff to train each other with Montessori lessons that would develop a level of comfort for delivering the lesson. We brought in a Montessori expert to observe and give private feedback to our teachers.

Cultivating an atmosphere of collaboration has been key as we all row in the same direction: Student Success.

....Toward Student Success!