



Monocacy Montessori Communities, Inc.
2421 Monocacy Blvd, Frederick, MD 21701

EVERY MMCI MEMBER'S

ESSENTIAL

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

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(ABRIDGED)

Submitted to
Frederick County Board of Education

by

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[Non-abbreviated]
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Section 1

Introduction and Justification

For over a year [before application submission Dec. 2001], members of Monocacy Montessori Communities, Inc. collaborated to make their vision of a public Montessori school a reality. These “Founders” are a group of committed people who believe a Montessori education is the best foundation for a society where lifelong learning is the norm. We also believe in the value and necessity of a sound and diversified public education system, in which all children, regardless of background or means, can obtain a quality education.

Charter schools are an excellent means through which these beliefs can be acted upon. They are public schools that are given greater autonomy than traditional public schools in return for greater accountability -- academic and fiscal. In Frederick County, charters are granted by the local Board of Education, which established a charter school policy in 2001.

Dr. Maria Montessori, a brilliant scientist and physician in Italy, designed a non-traditional classroom that has proven over the past century to be the most versatile learning environment. Maria Montessori’s approach to education was that of a scientist and her classroom environment and educational methodology were research-based and designed using the scientific method of observation and experimentation with materials.

The Montessori classroom was initially designed for severely learning disabled, impoverished and neglected children. Dr. Montessori was so successful in bringing these “uneducable” children up to the academic standards of their peers in the regular school system, that she applied her methodology and materials to children of normal ability and found equivalent success. The genius in Maria Montessori’s educational methodology is still unfolding today. The enormous strides made in the fields of neuroscience and cognitive science in the past ten years, including research using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology, have consistently supported Montessori’s work. Research in the fields of childhood development and linguistics has also strongly supported Montessori’s methods.

Research has shown that children attending Montessori preschools on average are one to two years ahead in learning to read and write and in learning math skills. Typically these students are reading and writing, adding and subtracting 4-digit numbers and learning fractions and multiplication, and studying geography and science. The Montessori Method has a one hundred-year history of being successfully used with all children – including the 10-20% of children who do not thrive in a traditional classroom.

These children may be developmentally delayed or they may be extremely gifted. Some of these children are both. There are dyslexic and autistic children who are extremely bright but cannot develop their intellect in a traditional classroom setting. Some of these are children with sensory integration and attention (ADD, ADHD) issues that drive behaviors not conducive to learning in a traditional classroom environment. Some are children with English language barriers and some are children for whom any language is a barrier. These are also children who are three or more years ahead of their peers and bored to tears even in traditional gifted and talented classrooms. And some of these are children who just seem to march to a different drummer and cannot be motivated to participate in school. These are some of the kinds of children who often do not academically succeed to their potential in a traditional classroom, who frequently become disenchanted with academic learning and turned off to school, and who sometimes create great difficulties for their teachers and other students in a traditional classroom. These children, as well as those comfortable in traditional classrooms, will commonly succeed in a Montessori setting.

Today the Montessori Method is in use in 52 countries and throughout the United States--and increasingly in public school systems. Here in Maryland, Prince George’s County has had the Montessori Method as a magnet program in public schools since 1986. Today there are three elementary schools and two middle schools with Montessori classrooms. The Prince George’s County Montessori Program has been very successful, carrying long waiting lists for entry. In recent years, the MSPAP scores have averaged 8.4% higher for Montessori elementary students and 26% higher for Montessori middle school students than their non-Montessori peers.

What is the Montessori Method? In a nutshell, it is a prepared environment in which a multi-aged (3-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-14 years) group of children self-select their “work” during long periods (2-3 hours) of uninterrupted work time. Children work independently, in pairs, or in small groups of their choosing. Children work at their own

individual level at their own individual pace, with as much repetition as they desire. There are no curriculum ceilings holding fast learners back. Each “work” is designed for self-education and is self-correcting; that is, the educational activities can be done independently and the materials make a child’s errors obvious thus making the learning process completely within the child’s control. The Montessori materials are designed to stimulate all of the child’s senses in the learning process. The Montessori Method of teaching reading is multi-sensorial and rigorously phonetic, and many Montessori students learn to read before Kindergarten. In a Montessori classroom there are many opportunities for reading and writing, however, the learning experiences are not language-dependent or reading-dependent. In a Montessori classroom children learn by doing. Because Montessori provides an exceptional hands-on learning environment and an engaging sensorial learning experience, it truly educates the whole child.

A Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County would be a great success and a great addition to the Frederick County Public School System. The Montessori Method is *not a passing fad nor an experimental program*. It has stood the test of 100 years time and hundreds of research studies in the United States alone. The Montessori Method has been shown to produce students with higher academic skills, longer attention spans, greater persistence in their studies, less aggressive behavior, greater self-control, and higher graduation rates than students in traditional school classrooms. And these effects have been proven to be long lasting. Montessori students are life-long, enthusiastic learners.

Historically, Montessori education in the United States has been primarily the domain of the elite due to high private school tuition--over \$6000/year even in Frederick County! Furthermore, Frederick County does not even have a private Montessori School serving Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. We need a Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County so that *all* children can have access to this extraordinary educational opportunity.

Section 2

FCPS Charter School Application

2. Desired grades/ages

MMC, Inc. has outlined the framework for a Montessori public charter school (PCS) that encompasses Kindergarten through eighth grade. Students will range in age from five years old through 14 years old. The Montessori Primary classroom is ideally designed for children from three to six years of age. An amendment to the approved charter will be submitted by MMC, Inc. for Frederick County Board of Education (BOE) approval if at some future time, a publicly funded preschool program will be added in order to enhance the overall program

3. Desired enrollment

Desired opening enrollment is 136 students; 6 classes at an average of 24 students per classroom. Final enrollment of public Kindergarten through 8th grade students will be 160; 1 Kindergarten classroom of 16 students, and 6 classrooms at 24 students per classroom.

[Financial realities required opening the school with 30 students each in grade level K-3, 24 each in grade levels 4-6; maximum school size is now set for an average of 30 students per grade level K-8, with a small fee-based primary program added in 2004-5.]

5. Proposed start date and duration for charter. Maximum duration is 4 years.

The start of school will be August 26, 2002, consistent with the tentative FCPS calendar. The Charter will continue through June 30, 2006, with an option to renew based upon compliance with the Charter.

7. Vision and Mission Statements for Montessori Public Charter School

7.1 Mission Statement

The Montessori Public Charter School (PCS) [that is, Monocacy Valley Montessori School] is a small, intimate and democratic learning community where children learn actively, think critically and solve problems

creatively. Students' innate desire to learn is fostered using the Montessori approach: a prepared environment, hands-on materials, mixed age classes, and self-directed learning. We empower students to become responsible, confident, caring citizens who possess strong academic skills and an enduring love of learning.

7.2 Vision Statement

The vision for our school is based on the hopes and dreams of the founding members and on observations of successful schools conducted by the Carnegie Foundation that resulted in the report "The Basic School: A Community for Learning."

- a. We will build a sense of community based on a shared vision by
 - i. maintaining a school size small enough for everyone to be known by name,
 - ii. engaging the parents and other members of the wider community in administration, curriculum, and day to day classroom activities,
 - iii. developing from within the whole community norms of caring, justice, discipline and communication, and traditions of celebration,
 - iv. eliminating or minimizing competition, rewards, and punishments.
- b. We will give intellectual priority to the centrality of language, understood broadly as the use and study of symbols: words, numbers, and the arts. These three broad groupings will be explored at a student's own pace with the maximum amount of autonomy and self-evaluation possible.
- c. We will develop a curriculum with coherence, based on the successful implementation of the Montessori Scope and Sequence by certified teachers and supplemented with cross-reference to the Frederick County Public School Curriculum. Our students will build a solid knowledge base through active learning in interdisciplinary projects and research and perform at or above average on all required state standardized tests.
- d. We will create a climate for creative, active learning by:
 - i. implementing the interactive, self-directive elements of the Montessori curriculum as well as the extensive use of interdisciplinary projects and research in the older grades,
 - ii. empowering teachers to do their creative best and making time for them to work with one another,
 - iii. keeping class size to a maximum of 24 students.
- e. We will educate the whole child, body, mind, and spirit by
 - i. modeling core values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, self-discipline, perseverance, giving, friendship, independence, tolerance, and democracy,
 - ii. embodying these values in the processes in the classroom and the governance structure,
 - iii. maximizing the use of the arts and freeing the child's body for movement, not only on the playground, but in the classroom,
 - iv. creating an opportunity for students to experience the excitement of learning new skills and knowledge, and also to reflect on the deeper purposes of life.

8. Action Plan and Strategies for Delivering Educational Program

8.1 Academic Goals

The MVMS curriculum will merge some core elements of the FCPS Curriculum with the Montessori Curriculum Scope and Sequence. The richness and depth of the Scope and Sequence, combined with the motivating elements of the Montessori method, will engage and challenge students so that they work at their full capacity.

We will give intellectual priority to the centrality of language, understood broadly as the use and study of symbols: words, numbers, and the arts. As students progress through the years and adapt to the self-directed nature of the Montessori approach, they are expected to become increasingly independent in their academic work. In addition, the depth at which students master subject matter will increase through the years, so that students advance beyond learning facts to analysis and understanding of relationships with other areas of knowledge. These general concepts are reflected in the following specific goals, which are to be applied as appropriate to the developmental level of each age group:

- a. Students will demonstrate an ability to read, write, understand, and speak clearly and effectively for a wide range of purposes (e.g., to express and defend one's viewpoint, to use logic, to engage in creative conflict resolution.)
- b. Students will demonstrate the ability to identify a subject and locate resources (books, periodicals, web sites, and personal interviews) for learning about that subject independently.
- c. Students will demonstrate the ability to critically review and integrate information about a subject into a coherent body of knowledge.
- d. Students will demonstrate the ability to convey what they have learned to others.
- e. Students will be proficient in basic computational skills, and develop an understanding of mathematical concepts with the ability to apply them to concrete and abstract problems.
- f. Students will demonstrate an ability to understand the relationships among different subject areas, and apply their skills in an interdisciplinary manner.
- g. Students will demonstrate the ability to use intuitive and logical skills to reflect upon and discern the value of new information and others' opinions.
- h. Each student will progress a grade level each year, or will meet the learning goals specified on their Individual Educational Plan (IEP).
- i. Average school scores will meet or exceed Frederick County average scores on required state standardized tests.

8.2 Non-academic Goals

The founding families share a strong conviction that striving for the personal characteristics, values, and standards reflected in these non-academic goals should be a daily part of the life of the school. We will consciously choose faculty who wish to embody these values in their work, and we invite prospective families to consider their own commitment to these values as they evaluate the appropriateness of this setting for their children.

Students will, to the degree appropriate to their developmental level:

- a. grow to have an understanding and acceptance of their personal strengths and weaknesses, and learn to use their strengths to help them with their weaknesses,
- b. discover their passionate interests and commitments,
- c. develop work habits and attitudes that will enable them to achieve goals they set for themselves,

- d. discover a variety of forms of artistic self-expression and develop increasing skill in one or more of their choosing,
- e. practice regular physical activities and grow in strength, endurance, and coordination,
- f. develop skills in forming and maintaining friendships, working cooperatively and noncompetitively with others, and resolving conflicts peaceably and respectfully,
- g. develop understanding and tolerance for individual differences and cultures and appreciation for diversity,
- h. learn to live with kindness and respect for others,
- i. develop a high value for honesty and integrity,
- j. integrate their emotional and rational capacities, including recognizing and naming feelings, and expressing feelings in appropriate ways,
- k. develop internal motivation for achievement and behavioral control, rather than relying on extrinsic rewards or coercion by authority figures,
- l. develop a willingness to accept responsibility for the effects of their choices and actions,
- m. identify themselves as citizens of the community, country, and world, with knowledge of the world around them, and willingness to take action for the greater good.

8.3 Educational Approach

Several key defining elements characterize the approach of MVMS to achieving the goal of optimal academic achievement for each student. It will be apparent that some of these elements relate to the nonacademic goals described above. For example, the elements of active learning and autonomy described here are both a means of achieving the nonacademic goals of internal motivation and successful work habits, as well as the nonacademic goals being a means to implementing the educational approach. At times, it is impossible to say what is the means and what is the end, and the relationship may seem circular. The goals and methods of the approach are tightly integrated, and work together in a unified direction.

An overview of these elements is provided here. As indicated below, several of these elements are described in depth in a subsequent section.

- a. Opportunity to *pursue subjects in depth*, facilitated by scheduling work in large blocks of time, and allowing student choice regarding subject matter and time invested in a topic, within a framework of meeting curriculum requirements (see section 8.7 (j) Long Work Periods).
- b. Facilitating an understanding of the *interrelatedness of different subject areas* by encouraging application of skills across subject areas. Independent projects often will be interdisciplinary in nature (see section 8.7 (g) Independent Learning, and section 8.7 (h) Interdisciplinary Approach).
- c. *Active learning* is promoted by defining the teacher's role as a support person for the students' pursuit of knowledge, as opposed to the primary source of knowledge. The amount of time the teacher will spend lecturing will be minimal (see section 8.7 (e) Teacher's Role).
- d. *Autonomy and intrinsic motivation* are fostered by many features of the learning environment, including opportunities for student choice; experiences that build faith in the ability to approach and master any topic; individual goal-setting, pacing, and self-evaluation (see section 8.7 (f) Choices, section 8.7 (g) Independent Learning, and section 8.8 Evaluation of Student Progress).
- e. Emphasis on developing *strong social skills*, including the ability to work collaboratively and participate in a democratic community (see section 8.5 Working Collaboratively and Living in Community.)

- f. *Individual responsibility* for making good choices, both in academics and in personal conduct. Students will be responsible for setting their own learning goals, participating in self-evaluation, and developing class and school norms for behavior (see section 8.5 Working Collaboratively and Living in Community and section 8.8 Evaluation of Student Progress).
- g. *Extending the learning environment into the community* by building alliances with local agencies and businesses (see section 8.7 (l) Extending the Learning Environment into the Community).
- h. *Active and extensive participation by parents* in every aspect of the life of the school (see section 8.4 Parent Involvement).

8.4 Parental Involvement

Active involvement of parents is at the heart of the MVMS program. Parents will be asked to sign a contract pledging 30 hours a year of volunteer service to the school (10 hours for single parent families). They are welcome in the classroom at all times and are urged to share their special skills and gifts. Specific ways in which parents might contribute in the classroom and to the school at large include:

- a. Serving on the Governing Council and its working subcommittees,
- b. Providing assistance with repair, maintenance, and upkeep of facilities,
- c. Helping students edit their written work,
- d. Offering to serve as a teacher to a small group or individual wishing to master a particular skill,
- e. Offering presentations or short courses to the class in response to student interest,
- f. Serving as substitutes when teachers are at staff meetings or day long staff development sessions,
- g. Accompanying students on trips off of school grounds,
- h. Offering work sites for observation or apprenticeships,
- i. Assisting and participating at class and all-school special events.

In addition to their volunteer contribution, parents will be expected to attend portfolio reviews, teacher conferences, and goal setting sessions with their own child. Parents will be encouraged to attend meetings of the corporation and school social gatherings. Younger and older siblings will be welcome at school functions whenever appropriate.

8.5 Working Collaboratively and Living in Community

Our trust is not only the child's academic success, but also the development of the whole self, as articulated in our nonacademic goals. We plan to give special attention to the social environment and its emotional tone. Cooperative learning is a meaningless pedagogical tool in an environment in which students are encouraged to be competitive in the classroom and allowed to belittle or ignore one another on the playground.

Given the Montessori perspective on educating the whole person, students' skills and abilities in negotiating social and group relationships are viewed as an integral part of the educational objectives. Montessori referred to this as peace education. The first goal of peace education is to teach self respect and conflict resolution skills. Daily practice with these skills in the classroom, modeled by teachers and other adults, is the best method of teaching these skills. Teachers and staff will model respect and kindness to students, as well as compassion and appreciation of individual differences. Students will be encouraged to be supportive and helpful to each other in their academic work, rather than competitive.

Students in every classroom will participate in developing classroom norms and expectations each year, and participate in class meetings, which will provide a forum for planning and problem solving. Students will be active participants and will be empowered to contribute positively to the direction and atmosphere of the school. Helping students to become part of the cooperative, democratic community will be a high priority in the early years of the school when students enter without previous years in a Montessori setting.

The second aspect of peace education is developed through learning about the world. Children discover that the world is a large place where many different people live, dress, speak, and act in different ways. As students develop self-esteem and self respect, respect for the ideas and beliefs of others also thrives, and tolerance for individual differences is fostered.

The small size of the school will allow staff to know all students by name and families to know each other. Continuity in relationships will exist from year to year. We will work toward the building of a cohesive and supportive community atmosphere in an intentional way. Beginning with a community picnic for all families before the first day of school, and continuing with other opportunities throughout the year, families will interact with other families in the school as a whole (not just individual classrooms). Students will be involved in planning and participating in school celebration days that involve all age groups. All of this will enhance the spirit of community, as students will be known by parents and students in all grades.

8.6 Montessori Principles

MMCI chose the Montessori philosophy and methodologies for the foundation of its charter school program because this method has been proven over the past century to provide one of the most versatile learning environments. Dr. Maria Montessori's approach to education was that of a scientist and her classroom environment and educational methodology were research-based and designed using the scientific method of observation and experimentation with materials.

In her work with underprivileged children, Dr. Montessori found that by providing carefully designed materials and by following the child's lead in pursuit of knowledge, she could in fact educate children previously thought to be uneducable. The genius in her educational methodology is still unfolding today. The enormous strides made in the fields of neuroscience and cognitive science in the past 10 years, including studies using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) methodology, have consistently supported Montessori's work. Research in the fields of childhood development and linguistics also has strongly supported Montessori's methods.

The basic principles of the theories and methods are as follows:

- a. Cognitive development follows a predictable progression from the concrete to the abstract. There are critical periods of time when children are most ready to develop and acquire certain skills. Educators must understand these levels and introduce material at times appropriate to the individual child.
- b. Academic, social, and emotional development is interdependent; education must center on the development of the whole child.
- c. Every child has an inner drive to explore and discover the world. This innate curiosity will lead to productive learning if given the proper environment, resources, and guidance.
- d. Learning is most productive when self-directed and founded on individual interest.
- e. For younger students, learning is most effective when it takes place through direct sensory experiences and interaction with objects in their natural context.
- f. Information should be presented in a pattern of whole-to-part, and integrated through interdisciplinary study, so students can place it in context and understand how things are related.
- g. Learning must be enhanced and applied, especially in later years, by going out and doing relevant work in the community.

Implemented together as a comprehensive methodology, these principles form a foundation for motivated learning and high achievement, thus meeting our mission to produce graduates who reach their full academic potential and are self-reliant, productive citizens adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving.

8.7 Montessori Pedagogy, Structure, and Materials

The MVMS classroom will be distinguished by its materials, structure, spirit, and pedagogical style as described below. Some of these elements will take a modified form as children reach middle school.

a. The Prepared Environment

The MVMS learning environment is designed to support a diverse, multi-sensory sequence of skill activities ranging from emergent to mastery levels. It includes visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modes of presenting information. The prepared environment includes manipulatives, reading materials, reference books, art supplies, equipment, and educational games that may be integrated with group activities or chosen as independent work. The hallmarks of an enriched environment are a variety of media and technology with which to create forms of communication and expression. Great care and attention to detail goes into creating this learning environment.

b. Classroom Design

The MVMS classrooms will be designed to encourage exploration. They will be arranged in study centers, with clusters of student-sized tables and open areas for floor work instead of individual desks. Each study center will be surrounded by shelves of books and materials pertaining to a particular area of study: language arts, math, history, and so on. Students will be allowed to move about the classroom and choose resources as they pursue their work plan. They will have the option to work individually or in small groups. Middle schoolers will be able to contribute to the design of their classroom, moving furniture, bringing in bean bag chairs, etc., to make it "adolescent friendly."

c. Montessori Materials

On the surface, the teaching materials will be one of the most obvious distinctions for the MVMS elementary classroom. Scientifically designed manipulative materials are at the heart of a Montessori classroom. Each one focuses on a particular concept or skill but addresses many levels of understanding, beginning with the concrete and moving to the abstract. The materials are self-correcting and provide the student with feedback, thus reinforcing autonomy, confidence, and self-motivation. Extensive written materials in each area of the classroom support the Montessori emphasis on research from reference books and primary and secondary sources (including the Internet). At the Middle School level, there are comparatively few prepared Montessori materials and manipulatives. Emphasis is on teacher-guided student research using primary and secondary sources.

d. Multi-age Classrooms

Students will be grouped in multi-age clusters usually spanning three years in the elementary program and two years in the middle school program. Multi-age classrooms maximize the curriculum options available to students, minimize competition, encourage cooperation, and foster self-confidence in students who serve as role models. They also provide for long-term teacher/student relationships. Teachers do not lose time each year learning about the interests, strengths, and weaknesses of a new classroom of students. The students who are new to the classroom enter a context with already well-developed norms for behavior, use of time, etc., and are able to integrate quickly into this context.

e. Teacher's Role

Montessori teachers will rarely be the center of attention in the classroom. Instead, the teacher is one source of information among many. This departure from the traditional format frees the teacher to spend time observing, guiding students, and making notes on progress. In addition, the MVMS teacher will actively model appropriate, respectful behavior and positive conflict resolution.

The responsibility of the teacher is to observe each learner, diagnose specific learning needs, and prescribe activities that will lead the child to the mastery of the particular concept, fact, or skill. The goal is to place all of the necessary resources within the learners grasp, to create a simple, comfortable system that the learner can use to acquire skills, to fine-tune the learner's progress with teacher assessment, and to monitor the results.

f. Choices

The learner is responsible for choosing how to spend his/her time in the use of the Montessori materials. To do this well, students must have a clear understanding of the organization and sequence of skill activities. "Daily instruction" is the Montessori term for the brief instructional moments the teacher uses to

focus the child's learning choices, monitor progress, and place accountability in the hands of the students while informing the team (including the parents) of the expectations and scope of the child's work. Much of the group collaboration work and all of the independent work done by learners involves guided choice. Becoming aware of the presence of choice in every aspect of our lives and accepting responsibility for making appropriate choices is a key element of the Montessori program.

Within the curriculum, every effort is made to follow the direction that student questions and concerns lead. Long-term, applicable learning occurs when the learner is invested and interested in the content. To create investment, students are involved in the planning of the curriculum and are responsible for choosing subjects for projects and portfolios. This involvement in planning increases as students progress through the program.

By the time they reach Middle School, they will have freedom to make many choices about their learning if they are able to do so responsibly and work consistently toward the goals they set for themselves. Learners who have difficulty selecting what is of interest to them receive support in the planning process. (Note that in the early years of the school, students in the older grades will not have the background of Montessori experience to prepare them for extensive choice and freedom. They will be given choice within a smaller scope, and that scope will increase, as they are ready to take responsibility for their education at a larger level.)

g. Independent Learning

The Montessori method emphasizes self-direction and self-motivation from the very beginning. This experience prepares students to undertake independent projects early in the elementary school years. Students will be asked to complete one or two (depending on the depth and scope) independent projects each year. There will be significant latitude given in the subject area and nature of these projects so students may develop skills and knowledge in an area of individual choice. Teachers will provide consultation to students in planning and carrying out these independent projects to the extent needed given developmental level and skills. These projects will provide students with the opportunity to integrate knowledge from more than one discipline and apply their independent research, writing, and speaking skills.

To model life-long learning, teachers will annually demonstrate to parents and students an academic project of their own. In addition, parents also are invited to share with students their own ongoing experiences of learning.

h. Interdisciplinary Approach

Subjects are taught thematically in order to strengthen their relationship to all disciplines. Students are taught to use reading, writing, and math as tools for the pursuit of knowledge and skills as well as a pleasure in and of themselves. This approach will motivate students to master the basic skills and use them in pursuing an understanding of the broad themes of the curriculum and their own particular areas of interest.

i. Immediate Feedback

Learning is most clearly remembered and accurately assessed when it is met with a response. The more immediate the feedback, the better. The Montessori materials are designed to be self-correcting, meaning they provide immediate feedback to students. In addition, collaborative groups and teacher follow-up provide personal feedback on a moment-to-moment basis. Rather than grades, learners and parents are involved in discussion and assessment processes that focus on competency levels being attained or attempted. Periodic meetings with teachers and parents and reviewing portfolios form the substance of progress reporting. Students are acknowledged for demonstrating personal best and personal responsibility as well as academic excellence.

j. Long Work Periods

Whole-class instruction time will be minimal. The school day will be structured to allow students to spend long blocks of time on work that they choose, sometimes on a special interest of their own, more often a project related to the curriculum. The opportunity to pursue chosen topics in great depth, without the

requirement to move quickly on to the next scheduled module, allows students the unique pleasure pursuing in depth an intellectual interest. It is our belief that the personal satisfaction of such pursuits ignites a passion for learning, the value of which exceeds the value of covering a large number of required topics more superficially.

This approach does not preclude meeting the goals of the school in terms of breadth of knowledge and covering core subjects. For example, even a student with only a marginal interest in or aptitude for math will be expected to achieve readiness for a traditional Algebra I class in 9th grade.

k. The Absence of Threat

In order for learning to take place, all learners must feel both physically and emotionally safe. Classroom guidelines, which are developed by the students in the class, include treating others with respect. Physical abuse and emotional abuse are unacceptable. The classroom must be a learning environment where learners are able to work without pressure or fear.

l. Extending the Learning Environment into the Community

The Montessori philosophy includes the concept of “going out” into the world to participate in aspects of the community. In the elementary years, this might include going to the post office to mail a letter, visiting the recycling plant, visiting senior centers, going to the humane society, and going to special arts events such as plays, concerts, and exhibits. Middle School students will have the opportunity to apply their learning in practical ways. This might include volunteering in a variety of social and community organizations, working part time in business or professional settings via internship experiences, and shadowing workers in jobs that might be of interest.

8.8 Evaluation of Student Progress

Teachers will draw on a variety of performance-based assessments to communicate to the student and his/her parents how that student is progressing. These methods may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Students will meet with teacher and parents periodically to set individual educational goals and evaluate progress. The appropriate frequency of these meetings may vary among individual students, but meetings should occur at least twice a year.
- b. Students who require more structure will design and fulfill weekly or even daily learning contracts with the teacher.
- c. Final goals and progress evaluations will be recorded in writing, and areas requiring special effort will be noted. Older students will be expected to draft a written self-evaluation prior to each meeting.
- d. Students will build a portfolio of written work, maps, graphs, research, videos, artwork, etc., to be reviewed periodically with teacher and parents.
- e. Students will keep daily journals of how they spend their time and make note of their progress in reaching specific goals.
- f. Students will test themselves in math skills so they can determine, in consultation with the teacher, when they are ready to advance to the next content area.
- g. Students will participate in group productions/projects, demonstrating or summarizing work on a class project to be presented to parents, staff, and interested others. Older students will publicly share the results of an annual individual project.
- h. Students will participate in peer reviews with each other. For example, a pair of students might proofread or critique each other’s writing assignment.
- i. Students will demonstrate mastery of a subject area by teaching it to a younger classmate.

- j. Teachers will keep records of work done with individual students.
- k. Students will make adequate progress each year satisfactorily on standardized tests as mandated by law.

Traditional methods of assessment such as letter grades and rewards for academic achievement are not seen as consistent with the philosophy and goals of this educational program.

8.9 Students with Disabilities

MVMS will work closely with the FCPS Special Education Department to ensure that admitted students with IEPs receive continuing support while attending the charter school. The parents and staff of MVMS will also identify any students who may need evaluation by the Child Study Team (CST) and will seek the appropriate support for identified special needs students.

The MVMS Principal Educator will ensure that the IEP developed by FCPS CST is implemented. To the extent possible, this implementation will be carried out in the classroom by the classroom teacher, in cooperation with a special education teacher provided by FCPS. Special services such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and others will be delivered by FCPS.

Each classroom is designed to be inclusive, allowing for general education children and special needs children to all learn together. MVMS will not have the capability to serve children who require their educational needs to be met fulltime outside the general education classroom.

9.0 Measurable Results

MVMS will ultimately be judged by how well it does the job of educating students in a safe and responsible environment. In order to determine if MVMS is meeting the student academic and nonacademic goals in sections 8.1 and 8.2 and managing the fiscal and operational responsibilities entrusted to the Governing Council, a well-functioning accountability plan must be established. As the charter school concept is in its infancy in Frederick County, there is no precedent for the establishment of reportable results outside those used by the traditional public schools. Realizing that accountability is essential to the charter school concept, as the price of greater freedom, the Governing Council of MVMS will continue to research and formulate the best methods for which to assess a Montessori school in the public charter school setting.

Most schools find that it is necessary to assemble a mix of assessments and measurement practices. A well-balanced set of assessments will include a range of methods, from the familiar standardized basic academic skills tests to less traditional "alternative" or "authentic" assessment and measurement practices such as systems for assembling and judging portfolios of student work. The best reporting/recording system is one that lets staff, students, parents, and the community, etc. know where students are in relation to desired outcomes. We realize the "real stakes" involved are more than the grades on a single exam or the renewal of an individual charter. What truly is at stake are the futures of the children who choose to enroll in MVMS.

9.1 Linkage to BOE Goals and Indicators

In the following paragraphs we will address each of the nine Board of Education goals and their respective indicators. The unique relationship between MVMS and the FCPS and the program of instruction we have selected changes the equation enough that some of the goals and/or indicators will not be applicable. Many of the goals, however, are applicable to any type of public school and we will adhere to the required reporting procedures. Evidence of attainment of these goals will be presented in the Annual Report to the BOE.

Goal 1. The primary objective of all disciplines will be to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and deep understanding.

As described in items 8.3, 8.6, and 8.7, the Montessori philosophy and methods are designed to help a student develop his/her ability to think, intuit, and discover; to develop a sense of independence, sequence, and order; to learn how to learn. As the Criterion-Referenced Evaluation System (CRES) Tests will not be administered at MVMS, evidence of attainment of this goal will be demonstrated by tracking students' progress through the Montessori Scope and Sequence. MVMS will administer a nationally normed skills test, such as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, at the appropriate levels. Additionally, MSPAP scores will meet or exceed the FCPS average.

Goal 2. All schools will promote a healthy and inviting school climate in which all members of the school community understand and practice the system's established core values. These values are guided by respect for others and personal responsibility.

We expect that students, parents, and staff will consistently find MVMS to be "healthy and inviting" as we are creating this school with the purpose of enabling all to work together. By its very nature, the school will be a warm and nurturing environment. Through our peace education program all will know and understand the core values of the school community. See Item 8.5, Working Collaboratively and Living in Community.

Evidence of attainment of this goal will be the documentation of relatively few behavior problems and consequences, including aggressive acts, suspensions, and dismissals. Staff will volunteer to help with the extra duties of the school. Teachers and students will show pride in student work by displaying it in classrooms and hallways. Parents will also contribute to the school climate by participating in scheduled events, volunteering to help with school duties, and supporting the school with their child at home; see Item 8.4, Parental Involvement. A summary of this data will appear in the annual report with selected examples. MVMS will participate in FCPS school survey programs.

Goal 3. All schools will provide comprehensive, consistent and coordinated services to all students as they progress through FCPS.

Evidence of attainment of this goal will be through documentation of student mastery of skills and concepts identified in the Montessori Scope and Sequence. Students identified as requiring additional services outside the classroom in order to achieve mastery of skills and concepts will be referred to FCPS for appropriate Special Education services. The school will work closely with the appropriate FCPS staff to ensure a coordinated delivery of services. Eighty-five percent of students in Grade 8 will score within one standard deviation of the FCPS mean or better on the Maryland Functional Reading Test, Functional Math Test, and the Maryland Writing Test.

Goal 4. Curriculum development and implementation will be a dynamic process that necessitates ongoing revision to meet the individual needs and diverse talents of all students.

The nature of the Montessori curriculum is implicitly dynamic and responsive to the interests and academic progress of the students each year; see Item 8.7 Montessori Pedagogy, Structure, and Materials. Each student's activities and progress will be documented in the journals maintained by each teacher for each student, as well as in student portfolios. We expect parents as well as professional staff to be part of this program of constant review and revision of each student's progress and goals.

Goal 5. Frederick County Public Schools and individual schools will develop partnerships that directly support and guide our educational goals. Working together with parents, community members, businesses and public officials, we will ensure that all students develop the skills and abilities necessary to be self-sufficient and contributing members of their communities.

See Items 8.4 Parent Involvement and 8.7.L Extending the Learning Environment into the Community. Parents and others will document volunteer hours in support of the school, e.g. service on committees and boards, assistance in the classroom or school office. Community support will be evidenced by financial contributions and attendance at corporation meetings.

Goal 6. FCPS will recruit, train, promote and retain high quality employees.

All of our teachers will have Montessori training. Our Principal Educator will be responsible for orientation of new staff and planning for future staff development. The staff will attend ongoing Montessori training programs and symposiums and the school budget reflects the cost for these events. Each of these activities will be documented and summarized in the annual Report with examples.

Goal 7. FCPS will provide the instructional technology to enable our students to access new ideas and information and the supportive technology necessary to enable staff and students to work and communicate effectively.

While computer literacy is fast becoming a required skill, students in a Montessori classroom rely on a wide variety of information sources. All students will demonstrate mastery of technology skills and concepts which

will be documented in their work and through instructional units. Computers will be used as a tool for communication between home and school to the extent possible

Goal 8. FCPS will provide permanent seating capacity for our growing student population and maintain existing facilities in a manner that ensures their longevity.

Given that many of the FCPS facilities are crowded already, approval of any charter schools will help alleviate some of that burden. MVMS will be kept small; we will not over enroll.

Goal 9. FCPS will manage our resources in a publicly accountable and cost effective manner.

MVMS's financial system of accountability will match that of the FCPS system. GAAP standards will be used to track resources and to conduct an audit.

9.2 Measurable Results for which the Charter School is Accountable

Table 1, Student Academic Performance Objectives, summarizes the methods by which our students' academic achievement will be monitored. The classroom performance measures are described in more detail in Item 8.8, Evaluation of Student Progress. The annual target column of Table 1 indicates that we expect at least 85% of students to achieve these academic objectives. We arrived at this target based on several factors. First, based on research with the Montessori program, it can be expected that the first year will be an adjustment period for students who are new to the teaching method and the degree of independence. The benefits of the Montessori program have been found to be cumulative and can be seen over a longer period of time. Furthermore, no educational approach is right for every child, and we anticipate that there will be a small number of children who do not adjust to the less structured environment. The 85% target is also based on the assumption of a normal distribution. Given a normal distribution of student achievement, about 15% - 17% of the children will fall more than 1 standard deviation below the mean in their academic progress. As our students gain more experience with this educational approach, we expect that increasing numbers of students will meet the objectives, and fewer will fall in the lower end of the range of normative scores.

11. Admission Procedure

Admission to the Montessori PCS will be open to all students residing in Frederick County [at the appropriate grade levels.] Students will be eligible for admittance without tuition charge. Admission will be granted to eligible children of the initial founders. A random-selection lottery process will be used if the number of [other] qualified applicants exceeds the predetermined student capacity in any given grade level. [Sibling preference will be given in the lottery.]

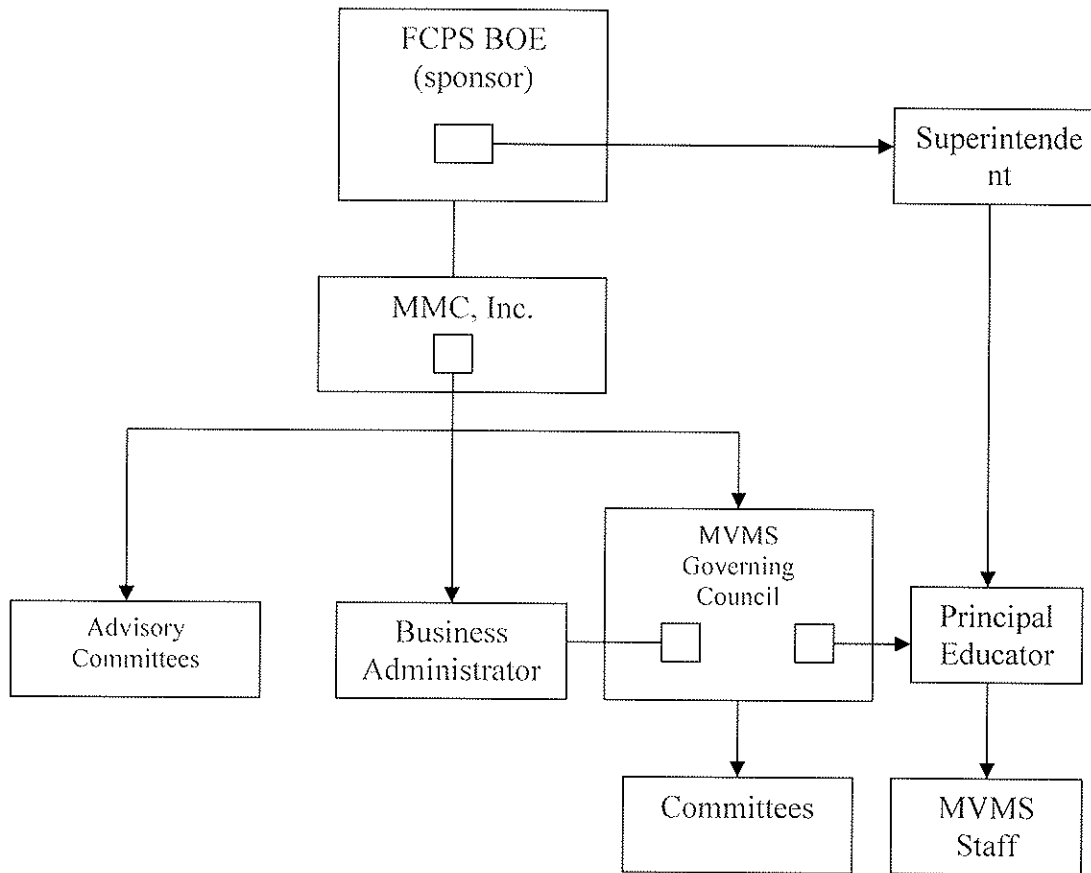
12. Management Structure and Staffing Plan [as revised at the Oct. 17, 2003 MMCI meeting; to be presented to the BOE for final approval]

12.1 Philosophy

MMCI believes that the education of a child can occur in many places and in many ways. We also believe that a democracy cannot survive without educated citizens willing to participate in the process. In order to model life in a democratic society for our students, we will govern ourselves using a system of decision-making in which parents and staff are fully represented in the governing structure. The benefits lie in the empowerment of the whole learning community and the increased knowledge base of all involved, e.g., all Governing Council minutes and its Committee meeting minutes will be available to any member of the school community. The Governing Council and its committees will seek ways to maximize participation by interested corporation members, consistent with its ability to carry out its responsibilities. The small size of the school makes this participatory, somewhat decentralized model possible.

12.2 Administrative Structure

Organizational Flow Chart



a. Sponsor

The sponsor, that is, the agency authorizing MMCI to establish MVMS and any future Montessori charter schools, is the Frederick County Board of Education (BOE). The sponsor ensures that MMCI receives in a timely manner the full amount of funding to which it is entitled. It evaluates the performance of schools and renews their charter at the end of each contract period. It must approve any amendments proposed to a school's charter.

b. Monocacy Montessori Communities, Inc.

Monocacy Montessori Communities is incorporated as a non-profit membership corporation in Maryland and received its 501©3 tax exempt status from the IRS in November 2003.

The members of MMCI will be all the parents/guardians of students attending the Montessori public charter schools, all staff members of the charter schools, and any non-parent members of the Board of Trustees and school Governing Councils. Members elect MMCI's officers and trustees as well as their school's Governing Council.

The corporation is the legal entity entering into charter agreement with FCBOE. It defines the mission and vision for schools and submits charter applications to the BOE. MMCI helps the Governing Councils to establish the school and to operate it thereafter in whatever ways are mutually agreeable. It negotiates terms and use of facilities and any independent contracts. It holds each school accountable to its own charter and budget, approving schools' Annual Reports, proposed budget revisions, and audits for submission to the Sponsor. It must also approve

any charter amendments proposed by a school's Governing Council for submission to the BOE. It is responsible for any non-FCPS programs at the site.

The corporation is required to meet quarterly the first year and then may meet on a semi-annual basis thereafter.

c. Governing Council [includes some amendments made at Oct 2003 Corporation Meeting]

Each MMCI school is run by a policy-making body, the Governing Council, which also functions as the school improvement team (SIT). Prior to the opening of MVMS in the fall of 2002, the school was governed by an Interim Governing Council elected by the school Founders. This Interim Governing Council served until the first permanent Governing Council was elected in October 2002. To ensure continuity, two of the parent members of the permanent Governing Council were required to have been former members of the Interim Governing Council.

The Governing Council of an MMCI school will be a nine-member body, consisting of four parents/guardians of current students, the Principal Educator, two additional staff members, and two Friends of Education. Staff members are elected by current staff only. Parent members and Friends of Education are elected by the corporation. The Governing Council will meet monthly (more often in the initial years as needed), will be open to all members of the corporation who wish to attend, and will publish its agendas and minutes widely.

Friends of Education are community members who do not have children enrolled in the school, but bring a community perspective and various skills needed by the GC. This apportionment of seats between parents, staff, and community members is designed to give decisive power to parents and teachers as long as they are united while, at the same time, ensuring that more than one view is presented on issues that might be the subject of close votes. (In the initial years, when the workload of GC members is very demanding, Friends of Education seats may be filled by parents or staff if necessary and if elected by the corporation.)

Terms for elected Governing Council members (parents and Friends of Education) are three years; elections are in October and members take office January 1. At start up, term lengths will be adjusted to allow for a staggered turnover.

Any Corporation member who is a parent/guardian of a currently enrolled student may run for a Governing Council parent seat if he/she has collected 10 names of supporters on a nominating form. After nominations have been made through the use of the nominating forms, the Corporation votes, with a runoff election if no candidate receives a majority.

For each Friend of Education position, the nominating committee will solicit input from the school community and propose a candidate for corporation approval.

With regard to staff members on the GC, the staff at each school will determine term lengths, their starting date and an appropriate election process.

The Governing Council carries responsibility for school policy decisions and monitors the operational decisions of the Principal Educator. For example, it develops the discipline policy, school calendar, staffing levels, and annual budget (in conjunction with MMCI's Treasurer). It determines the curriculum and monitors its implementation by the Principal Educator. It writes the Annual Report and proposes any changes to the charter. It may negotiate contracts for educational consultants. It communicates directly with parents, encouraging them to be involved in the life of the school and to serve on committees, whose work it monitors. It takes an active role in the hiring and retention of staff, including the Principal Educator. In collaboration with parents, faculty and students, it is responsible for crafting the policies and developing the school culture that will make it possible to carry out the mission and vision of the school.

d. Committees

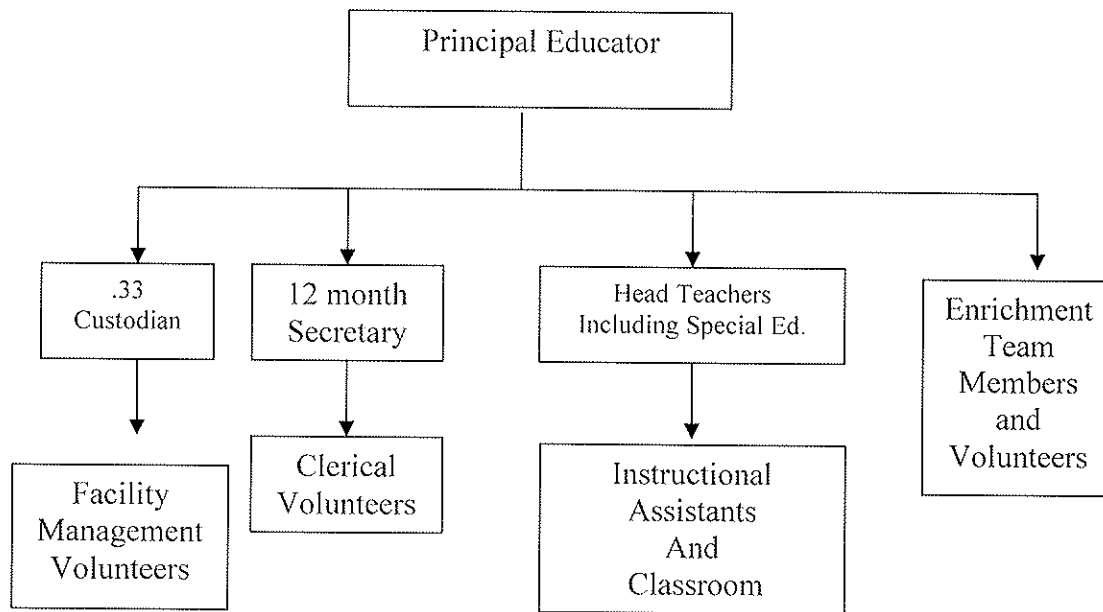
The Advisory Committees will be responsible for certain continuing functions and will also perform other work from time to time. Any MMCI member may volunteer to serve on these committees and committees may recruit additional volunteers from outside the Corporation as necessary. Because we seek to build extensive connections with the community, we expect to recruit volunteers from outside the Corporation with expertise in specific areas such as law, public relations, finance, special education, general education, management, and strategic planning to provide advice and/or to participate in short-term studies, e.g., to make policy recommendations. It is desirable, however, that a majority of the committee members be from the general membership of the Corporation.

Committee chairpersons will serve one-year terms with a maximum of four terms. Each AC will re-elect its own chairperson at the second meeting after the opening of each new school year, with the exception of the MMCI Finance Committee, which must be chaired by the Treasurer or Business Administrator.

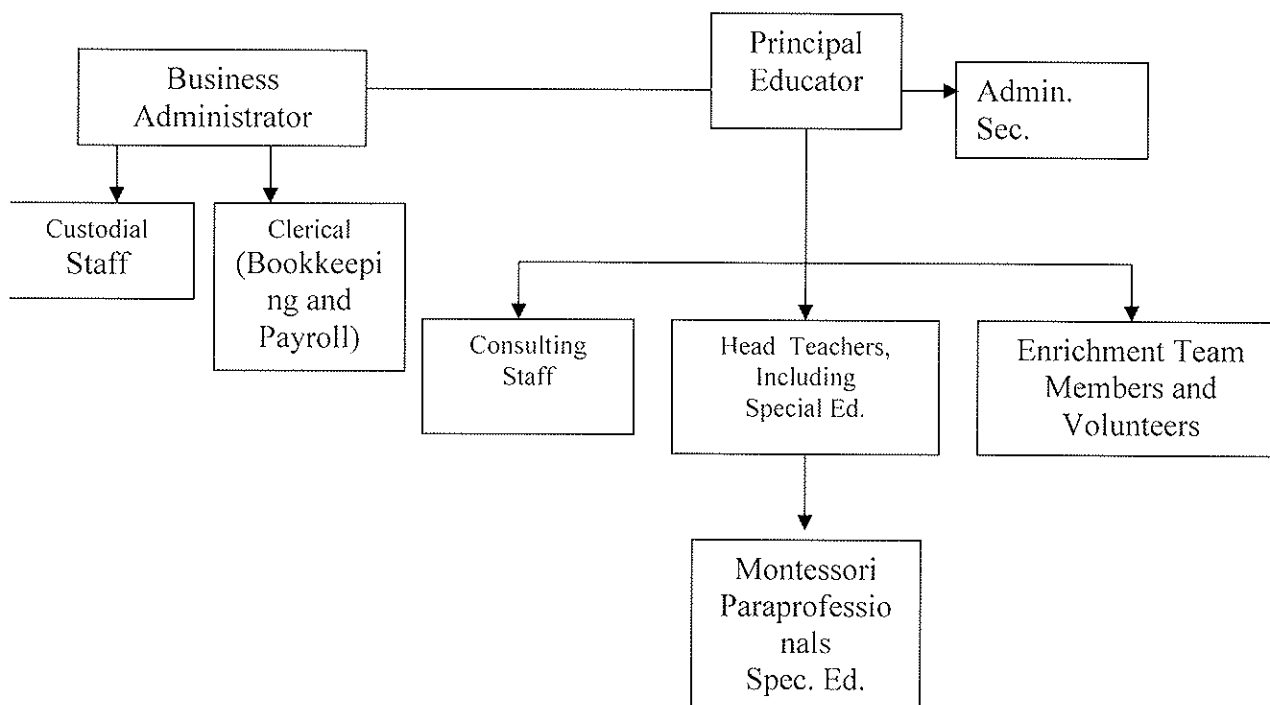
Examples of current committees are: Admissions and Enrollment; Community Building; Curriculum; Facility; Library; Public Relations, Fund-Raising, and Finance. Committees shall make regular reports to the GC and to the members of the corporation (via school newsletter and/or the school list serve.) The GC and MMCI Trustees may establish additional committees as needed.

12.3 Staff Structure

Current Staff Organizational Flow Chart



Future Staff Organizational Flow Chart



a. Principal Educator [this section currently undergoing further revision, spring 2004]

The Principal Educator (PE) allocates educational funds MVMS based on academic needs and goals, budget considerations and parameters set forth by the Governing Council. The PE will select core instructional materials and prepare and approve the classroom curriculum in conjunction with the Head Teachers. The PE will ensure that the educational program is delivered according to the charter's mission, goals, performance standards and learner outcomes. The PE prepares detailed job descriptions for all team members of the school, trains and mentors other teachers, and works with classroom teachers to determine their continuing educational needs, ensuring a continuous improvement program for the school.

The PE is also jointly responsible for ongoing student assessment, working with classroom teachers to determine individual needs and progress, reviewing academic plans and portfolios, and making referrals for outside evaluations when necessary. This person will be responsible for evaluating student applications and welcoming new children throughout the year. The PE is ultimately responsible for creating the proper "climate" of the school, ensuring that the learning community reflects the vision of the founders, parents, and staff.

b. Business Administrator

The Business Administrator (BA) is responsible for the financial operations of the school. The BA reports to the PE frequently and to the Governing Council at monthly meetings regarding the school's financial status. The BA establishes the school's financial systems and maintains budgets, operating plans, and management and financial reports. This position is currently being filled on a volunteer basis by the Treasurer and other members of the Finance Committee.

c. Head Teachers

Head Teachers are full-time classroom leaders responsible for directing students, as well as other teachers, assistants and volunteers who work in the classroom. The Head Teacher is also responsible for working with specials teachers to ensure that school or classroom themes are fully integrated. These teachers are hired, trained and mentored by the Principal Educator and consult with the PE on a daily basis.

The Head Teacher is a guide who helps direct the children's academic activities in a prepared Montessori

environment that challenges each child to reach his/her fullest potential in accordance with the Montessori philosophy. The Head Teacher will demonstrate knowledge of each child's work level and ability by maintaining lesson plans, record books and parent conference reports. This teacher must provide opportunity for and guidance in activities that build responsibility, choice and independence in a natural progression.

Additionally, the Head Teacher is responsible for the care and maintenance of classroom materials, and will involve the children in this responsibility. Head Teachers will schedule conferences and make personal contacts with parents as necessary and required by the PE, keeping parents informed of progress, concerns and opportunities. The Head Teachers are required to attend meetings, parent conferences and continuing education as determined by the PE. Such courses may include Montessori training, FCPS workshops and charter school conferences.

d. Teaching Assistants

The Teaching Assistants aid Head Teachers and the PE in preparing and maintaining the Montessori environment and in keeping classroom materials clean and orderly as directed. Montessori materials are set up and maintained according to specific classroom guidelines so those students will be able to work independently on lessons that have previously been introduced. Teaching Assistants will guide students in their daily work, introducing new lessons and ensuring that children are selecting a balance of all disciplines. The Teaching Assistant will report progress, concerns and opportunities to the Head Teacher, who will communicate with parents.

Teaching Assistants also assume responsibility for the safety and physical well being of the children at all times, and often assist with arrival and departure of the children. They will accompany children to the playground, assist at mealtimes and help maintain classroom records. A Teaching Assistant may also introduce and instruct students in a special discipline such as art, music, computer lab, foreign language or theater. Teaching Assistants will be required to take an active role in the vitality of the school community, including attending workshops, school functions and continuing education as determined by the PE.

e. Enrichment Team Members

Enrichment Team Members may be paid or volunteer, full or part time as determined by the PE. These Team Members could be student interns, parents, or resource specialists who successfully demonstrate an ability to work with children in a classroom setting. They will be selected by the PE, and will be trained by the PE and Head Teachers. These individuals are selected based on the needs of each individual classroom in providing for adequate manpower to achieve academic goals, hold worthwhile specials classes and provide for an orderly classroom. Duties include providing enrichment, supervision, nurturing, instruction and classroom support, which may include record keeping, office assistance or leading a special class.

f. Administrative Secretary

The Administrative Secretary will answer the phone, relay messages, and greet students and visitors to make them feel welcome and leave them with a favorable first impression of the school. The secretary reports to the PE and also works for the BA (or with parent volunteers responsible for the financial aspects of the school). Duties will include filing, recording keeping, some volunteer coordination and financial tasks as delegated by the BA. The secretary's tasks will be varied and changing, depending on the school's needs and activities at any particular time.

g. Bookkeeper and Payroll Clerk

The Bookkeeper and the Payroll Clerk are responsible for carrying out duties as assigned by the Business Administrator. They may be part time or full time depending upon the needs of the school. Both individuals will be tasked with maintaining financial records for all MMCI activities taking place at the charter school facility. During the 2002-2004 school years, these positions are being filled by volunteers.

12. 4 Hiring, Dismissal and Evaluation

Hiring and dismissal will follow the regulations of FCPS, with the variation that hiring will be a mutual decision between FCPS, the PE, and the GC appointed Interview Team (which will include parents and staff). The PE has the power to remove any employee immediately if that employee is endangering or threatens to endanger the life of another person. Head teachers will be required to have Montessori certification at the time of hire or within one year.

Observations and evaluations will conform to the terms of the bargaining agreement with the variation that the GC will provide an Montessori addendum to the standard form and the Personnel Committee will supply additional input to the PE. Evaluation will be based upon expected performance especially in terms of student achievement, cooperating with and supporting other staff to perform at their best level, and communicating with parents so as to establish and keep strong home-school ties.

13.1 Per Pupil Revenues

Using data from the Approved Annual Budget Report for FY-2002 (pages 13-22), the per pupil allocation will be determined.

Code	Account	Total
01.0	Administration	\$0
02.0	Mid-Level Management	\$19,298,702
03.0	Instructional Salaries	\$119,071,163
04.0	Instructional Supplies	\$6,080,935
05.0	Instruction – Other	\$3,270,073
06.0	Special Education	\$0
07.0	Pupil Personnel	\$0
08.0	Health Services	\$0
09.0	Pupil Transportation	\$0
10.0	Operation of Plant and Equipment	\$19,241,969
11.0	Maintenance of Plant	\$0
12.0	Fixed Charges (50%)	\$53,307,427 (50%)
14.0	Community Services	\$0

The total revenues from the designated categories (codes 02, 03, 04, 05, 10, 12 [50%]) were divided by the projected enrollment for FY 2002 (37,754) for a total of \$4933. This, however, is slightly higher than the figure of \$4,885 provided by the Superintendent’s office. The \$4,885 figure may have been calculated using an enrollment figure of 39,635, which may be an actual enrollment figure for the current school year. If real enrollment moves toward the projected enrollment, MMCI would expect to receive the adjusted per pupil allocation. In the meantime, the **per pupil figure of \$4,885** has been used for planning purposes for YR 01. Subsequent years were planned with a conservative 3% increase in the per pupil figure.

In addition to the per-pupil allocation, two other sources of funding will be handled as follows:

- a. All federal funds from programs for which MVMS may be eligible, or for which the students of MVMS may be eligible, shall be transferred to the school, whether or not MVMS has requested or has knowledge of such funds. MVMS will provide FCPS with the actual number of students that will qualify for federal programs.
- b. All private endowments, gifts, donations, etc. to FCPS will be shared with MVMS if such endowments are district or statewide. MVMS will receive the applicable prorated amount based on the applicable method of distribution. Endowments specifically earmarked for a project or a single school would be exempt. Similarly, any endowments, gifts, donations or grants earmarked for MVMS will belong solely to them.

[Informational update, October 2003: The total allocation for MVMS for 2003-2004 is \$1,114,884.00 based upon a per pupil figure of \$5,994 and 186 full time equivalent students (our kindergarten students are designated 0.6 FTE). Our 2002-2003 per pupil figure was \$5,348.

Our allocation does not include funds for county system overhead, which means the per pupil is lower than that of the county system as a whole. In addition, the MVMS allocation does not include any FCPS capital funds, which means our rent and initial furnishings and instructional materials had to come out of the per pupil allocation (which in other schools is only used to operate an existing building and program.).

Specific start up funds were not provided, but the BOE agreed to allow a certain level of “debt” to be carried only for the term of the charter. Therefore, the MVMS budget balances at the completion of the 2005-2006 school year.

Our total expenses this year (2003-2004) are \$1,178,430, which necessitates parents raising approximately \$38,000 (leaving roughly \$30,000 in debt carried into next year.)

For details on our current financial situation contact Jim Voss, Treasurer, or Finance Committee Members Leslie Mansfield, Lester Foster, Mike Steeves, Jonathan Tross and Annette Cleveland.]

13.4 Fees

MVMS will not charge any fees or tuition excepting fees that legally may be charged for various FCPS programs. The school may request voluntary donations from parents, during such times as parent orientation, but they will never be required.

13.5 Support Services

There are no provisions for to-and-from school transportation. Parents will be responsible for the transportation of their children to MVMS. If however, children attending MVMS can reasonably use the public school bus system, it will be utilized to the extent possible. FCPS has agreed to accept creative proposals, however, children attending MVMS may only use the public school buses if seats are available. Future bus transportation provided MVMS will be studied. MVMS will contract with a local school district or outside bus services for field trips.

Initially, parents of the students may be responsible for providing sack lunches for their children. Consideration will be given to subcontracting school lunches to local school district food services. School lunch may be provided at a future time when personnel and equipment necessary for this task are available.

14. Format for Annual Report to Board of Education

Absolutely central to the charter idea is the notion that charters will have fewer rules and regulations about how to operate in exchange for being accountable for results. In keeping with that principle, the Governing Council will issue an annual report to the BOE. This report will document the measurable outcomes discussed previously in Item 9. Measurable Results.

1. A description of the current year's fulfillment of our academic and non-academic goals.
2. A summary of the results achieved by students as measured by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) or a similar skill-based test.
3. A summary of the results of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP).
4. A summary of the results of the Maryland Functional Reading, Writing, and Math Tests.
5. The school's average daily attendance rate.
6. The number of incidents that occurred on the school grounds that resulted in suspension or expulsion of students.
7. The percentage of students who have graduated to the next multi-age class level.
8. The number of student service hours outside the school.
9. The school calendar including the length of the school day and hours of operations.
10. The total number of pupils enrolled at the school during the previous school year.
11. The number of names on the waiting list.
12. The transportation services available.
13. The number of volunteer hours of parents and other community members.
14. The make-up of committees and the percentage of parents serving on committees.
15. A description of community support through documentation of donations and attendance at corporation meetings.
16. Description of staff development completed and planned.
17. Grants applied for and received.
18. A copy of the annual audit conducted by a certified CPA.

The Annual Report to the BOE will be distributed to all parents of students enrolled at the school. A summary of the contents will be presented by the Governing Council and discussed at a meeting of the corporation. This meeting will be open to the public and will be announced in the local media at least two weeks ahead of time.

Appendix H The Middle School Curriculum (ages 12-15)

Dr. Montessori provided a theoretical framework, but not a detailed educational plan, for the middle school age group. Montessori found adolescents impressive intellectually, able to discuss abstract ideas, weigh evidence, and reason through to a conclusion. She saw they are deeply interested in discussing moral, philosophical, and spiritual issues. They seek to express themselves in writing, in the arts, and of course, in their clothing, and to understand themselves in relation to the world. More than ever, they ask, "What is the purpose of learning this?" Dr. Montessori challenged educators at this level to devise a plan of education that combines intellectual discovery with real life situations in nature and society.

In the middle school, we will continue to balance mastery of content with opportunities for research, critical thinking, creative activity and community involvement. Parents and staff will work hard to create a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere that encourages respectful social interaction and creative problem solving. Even more than in the elementary classrooms, students will be allowed to make personal choices regarding the content, pacing and scope, and assessment of their work, sometimes with a particular domain and sometimes within a broad range of options.

In addition, middle school students will be given increasing opportunities to bring their knowledge into the community and to learn in community settings. Many of the options discussed in Item 8.7L Extending the Learning Environment into the Community and Item 8.4 Parent Involvement will be particularly relevant to middle school students. Because much time will be spent on group projects (e.g., book groups, teams working on science projects, etc.), increased training in group process and leadership will be provided with the expectation that it will facilitate their academic progress and also encourage them to take leadership in the school.

Educational content in the Middle School curriculum below is organized into classic subjects for the purpose of description, but in application these categories often will overlap with each other, as described in Appendix F (Seldin article). Working within the context of the general subject areas corresponding to the FCPS core curriculum for this age, we will continue to focus on building a safe and supportive group and encouraging individual student motivation and interests. Students will participate even more actively than in elementary school in developing group and individual goals, selecting and assessing projects, deciding the depth and scope of their pursuit in particular areas, and the pacing of their work. Staff and parents will work to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages inquiry, creative problem solving, cooperation, and respectful social interaction. Each formal unit will have three phases:

- a. **Introduction of topic.** Material is presented, usually by the teacher. This phase is brief, and is designed to give the big picture, to arouse curiosity, and to spark questions.
- b. **Exploration.** Time and materials are provided for exploration, which might take the form of manipulatives (although less frequently than in elementary school), answering questions, reading, writing, research, field trips, experiments, interviews, practice, etc.
- c. **Demonstrating mastery.** This can be done through performance tasks, such as skits, videos, posters, graphs, poems, essays, problems solved, research papers, tutoring others, etc.

As in elementary school, the goal is for students to spend their time in school *actively learning*, rather than *passively listening* to a teacher.

Language Arts

As in the previous levels of the Montessori curriculum, language is seen as an important and integral part of the curriculum. Its treatment as a separate subject comes only at the points that it is necessary to give clarity to the student's thinking about language usage so that he or she may use language more effectively. Language usage includes spoken as well as written language, and both are considered equally important.

There will be regular opportunities for practicing spoken language, primarily in the form of small group discussions. Topics for discussion will include a book read by the group members, a political or current topic of interest, generating solutions for a problem in the classroom or school community, etc. Students will learn to participate in discussions through active listening, responding respectfully to ideas put forth by others, asking relevant questions, and putting forth their own ideas and opinions. Skills and techniques for moderating discussions effectively will be taught, and students will be given opportunities to practice these skills.

Drama productions, story telling, reading aloud to younger students, dramatic impersonations of historic figures are all possible ways in which the oral curriculum might be enriched. Another important opportunity for practicing spoken language will be class presentations of independent work in all subject areas, not just language arts.

Students will practice the expository and research-based prose required for future academic success. They will be encouraged to write creatively in a variety of genres – plays, short stories, poems, etc. Students will also discover a variety of “real-life uses” for writing (e.g., minutes of class meetings, letters to prospective mentors in the community, memoranda of concern to the school’s governing council, letters to the editor and government representatives, invitations to class speakers, etc.).

Grammar and usage at the Middle School level will continue to be taught as needed to facilitate language usage in writing and speaking. Applied study of grammar and rules of usage will take place in “writers’ workshop” sessions, during which teachers and parents can work with students to edit work and improve skills. In addition, students can practice editing work for each other.

Rather than prescribe to teachers and students all the books they should read, teachers will be empowered to develop a general curriculum for their class. Within this general curriculum students will have a variety of choices.

Mathematics

Mathematics will continue to address the individual’s developmental needs by moving systematically from concrete introduction to abstract understanding. Students will focus on pre-algebra and algebra by using commercial textbook programs as a primary resource. Geometry will be viewed as the tool that reveals and clarifies the relationships and processes in mathematics and algebra.

Students can be expected to be at different points in their mastery of mathematical concepts. Students will work at their own pace and level, independently or in small groups and not necessarily out of the same texts. Some students may progress to Algebra I during their final year; others may not. At a minimum, all students will be prepared for Algebra I in 9th grade.

Efforts will be made to provide an applied context for using math skills and to respond to student interests. Interdisciplinary opportunities for application of mathematical concepts will be sought out. The study of statistics provides a particularly rich opportunity for application of skills to understanding research findings, polling data, etc. In order to provide opportunities for applied use of mathematics as well as logico-mathematical reasoning, the teacher might introduce topics not typically included in the middle school math curriculum (e.g., logic).

At a minimum, students will cover the FCPS content areas for 7th and 8th graders, which includes the following: square roots, rational numbers, stem and leaf plots, measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), geometry (areas, angles, triangles), graphing, probability, order of operations, and data analysis.

Science and Social Studies

Social Studies focus on understanding our country and the world we live in. Students explore historical and cultural development, geography, and its influence on culture, economics, technology, religion, and political systems. Themes include human interaction with the environment, conflict and cooperation, patterns of social and political interaction, civilization, cultural diffusion and innovation, and values and beliefs within institutions.

The science program focuses on understanding the relationship between the natural world and humankind. Writing and mathematics thinking are integrated into scientific studies, and interdisciplinary connections with Social Studies are explored through thematic units of study.

The program will follow the general curriculum modules set out in the Middle School Guide and FCPS curriculum, but in a flexible manner. For example, if the program for a particular grade in the FCPS curriculum includes a waste management module, a module on oceans, and a module on endangered animals, each of these topics will be covered, but not necessarily with the same depth and scope. Depending on student interest, one module may occupy considerably more time than the other, and involve more independent research, projects, etc. Another module might be covered simply by reading and discussion, and therefore take less time. The curriculum will follow a 2-year cycle so that all students will be exposed to both the 7th and 8th grade content areas.