



WEST SUBURBAN MONTESSORI SCHOOL

SINCE 1988 • OAK PARK, ILLINOIS

HEAD OF SCHOOL

July 1, 2026



West Suburban Montessori School, one of the Chicago area's most highly-regarded Montessori schools, seeks a head of school for July 2026. With a dynamic program, a dedicated faculty and staff, and culture of mutual respect and inclusion, WSMS is poised to build upon a clear vision and continue to thrive into its next era.

The board of trustees of West Suburban Montessori School is looking for its next head to move the school forward by building upon its unique strengths and qualities. Along with the introduction in the pages that follow, we invite you to review the [WSMS website](#) to get a sense of the school's special heart and spirit.



ABOUT WEST SUBURBAN MONTESSORI SCHOOL

West Suburban Montessori School is an AMI-accredited Montessori school dedicated to children ages 3 through 12, with authentic mixed-age classrooms and AMI-trained guides in every room. WSMS emphasizes individualized, hands-on learning, uninterrupted work cycles, and whole-child development—intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and moral—with a strong, nurturing community ethos that parents consistently praise for sparking curiosity, independence, and compassion in their children.

Founded in 1988 by AMI teacher-trainer Niranjana Bashyal, West Suburban Montessori School was established specifically to offer a true traditional Montessori curriculum in the community. WSMS began with a primary program serving children ages six through nine. An elementary program was added in 2015, and the school now serves children through the age of 12. The school is set in a thriving suburban community nine miles from downtown Chicago and resides in an attractive building constructed in 1925 and owned by the school.

The lead guides and the current head of school are members of AMI and the North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA). In addition to being AMI-recognized, the school is also a member of the Association of Illinois Montessori Schools (AIMS), the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), and Independent School Management (ISM) and is registered as an Illinois non-public Montessori School by the Illinois State Board of Education.



MISSION

At West Suburban Montessori School, we believe that a quality Montessori education is an aid to life and that in committing to the education of the whole child, we are committed to building a better world for future generations and, ultimately, a more peaceful world. We believe in igniting the child's natural curiosity for learning.



WSMS AT A GLANCE

107 *Students*

74 Primary (ages 3-6)
15 Lower Elementary (ages 6-9)
18 Upper Elementary (ages 9-12)
59 BIPOC students

14 *Guides and Assistants*

5 *Administrators and Staff*

\$1.4M *Annual Budget*

\$15,060
-\$17,895 *Tuition*

\$35,000 *Financial Aid*

EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

West Suburban Montessori School recognizes and values the diversity of our world. Guided by Dr. Montessori's understanding of children, our goal is to promote equity and inclusion in an environment that respects and supports the identity of each child and creates a community in which each person feels valued and understood. We do this by embracing a community of many cultures, races, ethnicities, religions, world views, and ages. Abilities, family structures, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and socioeconomic backgrounds enrich the life of WSMS. We recognize that children are often aware and curious about everyone, and we strive to eliminate bias, foster peace, and encourage the exchange of ideas in our school and throughout our community.



PROGRAM

West Suburban Montessori School focuses on the development of the whole child, not just academic skills. Children who attend WSMS are guided on a path toward independence. They are strong-minded, creative thinkers who approach problems from outside of the box and carry themselves with confidence. Central to the culture of WSMS is a deep respect for others, a commitment to kindness and hard work, and fostering the enthusiasm essential for genuine learning to flourish.

WSMS has five classrooms led by AMI-trained guides: three primary (ages 3-6); one lower elementary (ages 6-9), and one upper elementary (ages 9-12) with a total enrollment of 107 students.

WSMS offers a Spanish program in each classroom, supported by a native Spanish-speaking assistant working closely with the children to enhance their learning experience. The Spanish program fosters language development and cultural awareness, enriching the Montessori curriculum for all students.

Hallmarks of the school's primary mixed-age, child-centered classrooms include having hands-on materials, not subscribing to a one-size-fits-all approach, planning time for group activities and play, and including a kindergarten program.

The elementary program includes exploration into various subjects including art, biology, geography, history, language, math, music, and Spanish. The learning approach is guided by three key concepts: interconnected learning, individual exploration, and community engagement.

Parents note that their children are "being taught to navigate this world" and love going to school every day. Children express appreciation at being able to learn at their own pace. A parent observed with gratitude that the guides "meet the kids where they are and take it beyond."

For ten weeks during the summer, the school operates one primary classroom with a maximum of 32 students who are currently enrolled during the school year at WSMS. Two of the young adults assisting with the summer program in 2025 are WSMS graduates.

Please visit [the website's](#) programs pages to learn more about the academic program and get a sense of the school's commitment to the integrity of a Montessori education.



PEOPLE

While WSMS serves children primarily from Oak Park, students also come from the nearby communities of Berwyn, Broadview, Brookfield, Chicago, Elmhurst, Elmwood Park, Forest Park, Franklin Park, Maywood, Melrose Park, River Forest, and Villa Park.

11 percent of students receive scholarships. The school fundraises exclusively for the purpose of providing scholarships to families in need with events held throughout the school year. The school is diverse, with 55 percent of students identifying as BIPOC.

There are 19 total staff members at WSMS; this includes five classroom guides, a physical education teacher, and eight classroom assistants. Along with the head of school, there are three other members of the administrative team, of which two are full-time and one is part-time. Two staff members' children also attend the school. 55 percent of staff identify as BIPOC.

The faculty praises the culture of growth that exists at the school, and they feel trusted to do their work and rely on their own training and judgment. Faculty and staff appreciate the community and sense of "home" they feel at WSMS. Retention of faculty and staff is remarkably high at 93 percent for 2025-26.

Parents praise the tight-knit community and also independently use the word "home" as a descriptor. When they speak about the community, they talk about "co-creation," that it is part of the culture for parents to be as involved as possible, and that one doesn't get any sense of having a "transactional" relationship with the school.

The board of trustees meets five to six times a year and has nine members, including current and past parents and the head of another school. Board committees include finance, head support and nominating, scholarship, and strategic planning.



PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT HEAD OF WSMS

1. Implementing strategies to enhance enrollment and retention

In a region with strong public and independent school choices, the next head will need to continue to enhance and communicate the school's value proposition and expand marketing efforts to increase visibility in the community.

2. Growing the school through strategic decision making

Opportunities exist for WSMS to grow through the possibilities of adding a toddler program and a middle school program. The next head will lead these efforts, strategically working with the board and managing details to determine the programs to bring to fruition.

3. Preserving, enhancing, and communicating the school's distinct culture and ethos grounded in AMI principles

WSMS is committed to providing quality Montessori education with highly trained and experienced guides and staff. The school is proud of its commitment to live out Dr. Montessori's theory as an AMI-Recognized School, not only shaping their classroom practices, but also as an influence on school leadership, decisions, and relationship building.



CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES & EXPERIENCES

The next head of West Suburban Montessori School will:

- Be an experienced Montessori teacher, preferably with AMI training
- Have leadership experience within a Montessori school setting
- Embody and model Montessori values in daily practice
- Demonstrate patience, humility, and emotional intelligence
- Be nurturing and compassionate
- Possess strong management, organizational, and operational skills
- Be present and visible both at school and in the greater community
- Lead with collaboration, mutual trust, respect, and transparency
- Have strong financial acumen
- Demonstrate strategic thinking and the ability to articulate and execute a clear, long-term vision
- Have an abiding commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging
- Be team-builder who leads collaboratively in decision making and fosters strong relationships with all stakeholders
- Be committed to professional growth and development, empowering faculty and staff to thrive
- Be an excellent communicator in both writing and speaking
- Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to enrollment management and community engagement in support of the school's long-term sustainability



INFORMATION ON THE SEARCH PROCESS

West Suburban Montessori School's next head of school will begin on July 1, 2026. The board of trustees has appointed a search committee to conduct the search and has engaged a national executive search firm, Educational Directions, to assist the committee.

Please direct all inquiries and nominations in confidence to:

Jay Underwood | jay.underwood@edudx.com

Nicole McDermott | nicole.mcdermott@edudx.com

Interested candidates should begin the application process as soon as possible and email the consultants with a resume before submitting other materials. Interested individuals must contact the consultants and share a resume at least seven days prior to the deadline below in order to be considered as a candidate in this search.

After an initial conversation with the consultants, applicants should submit the following documents, in this order, in a single PDF via email:

- A letter addressed to Members of the Search Committee explaining their interest in becoming the next head of West Suburban Montessori School
- A resume detailing current and previous roles and accomplishments
- A statement of educational philosophy
- The names, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers of five references with an explanation of their relationship to the candidate

References will not be contacted without the prior agreement of the candidate, and finalists will be expected to furnish seven additional references.

The annual salary range for this position is \$115,000 to \$160,000 with a benefits package that includes health insurance and access to a retirement savings program.

West Suburban Montessori School is an Equal Opportunity employer and seeks qualified candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds and identities.

Search Calendar

November 1 Application Deadline

Interested candidates must have already contacted the consultants at least 7 days prior to this, before submitting their single PDF

December 6-7 Semifinalist interviews

on Zoom

January 8-16 Finalist interviews

on site, 2 days

