

A Brief History of KMS

- 1966 – KMS was founded by parents interested in bringing Montessori education to Knoxville. It was the first Montessori school in Knox County and was registered as a non-profit from the moment the doors opened.
- 1966-1971 – KMS was located at Messiah Lutheran Church in Bearden and consisted of one Primary class with Pre-K and Kindergarten-age students with one teacher and several parent volunteers.
- 1971-1981 – KMS moved to the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church and grew to include a 1st-5th grade Elementary program. By the late 70's enrollment had reached 70 students with 6-8 teachers and assistants.
- 1981 – KMS moved to its present location (previously a private residence designed by Barber McMurry, one of Knoxville's best-known architecture firms, and built in 1928). The property was initially bought by several parents and rented to KMS for usage. KMS took full ownership of the property in the mid 80's. Two classrooms were immediately added to the original building.
- 1990-2000 – Due to staff and leadership changes, as well as more choices of Montessori schools in the Knoxville area, enrollment dropped from over 80 students to 37. KMS spent this time in new growth.
- 2002 – An extension was added and used as the Elementary classroom. A new Primary class was developed in the space that Elementary left.
- 2013 – The Primary classrooms, Music Room, and Kitchen were upgraded. A hallway was added to improve circulation in the building.
- 2014 – The playground was upgraded creating a more natural play space for students.
- 2018 – KMS was accredited by the International Montessori Council. The Elementary classroom was renovated and split into Lower and Upper Elementary. This added a 6th grade to the Upper Elementary Class, creating a true 3-year cycle.
- 2020 – The Covid-19 pandemic changed some operations for the school. Classes were smaller to permit a safer learning environment, but enrollment grew once students began to return and the pandemic hit major health milestones (vaccine availability, treatments).
- 2022-2023 - KMS expanded to include both a middle school (7th-9th grade) and a Toddler Transition class (2-year-old). A change in our administrative structure was made, and a new Head of School with extensive Montessori training and experience was hired.
- 2023-2025 - The purchase of the property next door to KMS allowed the school to meet enrollment demands and double its campus size. First High School students enrolled in 2023. KMS' first High School graduate completed their diploma in December 2024.
- Present - Summer 2026 KMS became a Category III school with two additional accreditations; National Council for Private School Accreditation and Cognia. KMS is in the process of adding a third building to the property. Fall of 2026 KMS is home to two toddler classrooms, three primary classrooms, two lower elementary classrooms, one upper elementary classroom, and a thriving Adolescent program that includes Middle School and High School