

Bright Water Montessori School

Annual Report

2004-2005 School Year

Mission Statement

Bright Water Montessori School celebrates diversity, passion for learning and respect in an environment that nurtures and prepares the whole child for life.

Philosophy and Goals

Bright Water is a diverse community inspired by the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori. In partnership with parents, we guide and encourage children to develop their individual gifts. We nurture independence, a love of learning, self-esteem, cooperation, creative thinking, and respect for self and others. We strive to meet the needs of individual children and celebrate their uniqueness while preparing them for life in a cooperative community and a changing world.



Our History

On February 17, 2005 the Bright Water Montessori School community celebrated our first birthday and moved into the second year of existence. In June of 2003 Ann Luce, with support from Lake Country School, applied for a grant from the Hiawatha Education Foundation to start a Montessori school that would serve

toddlers and preschoolers from low and middle-income families. The Winona based Hiawatha Education Foundation was created by Minnesota State Senator Robert Kierlin and his family to help create positive learning environments for "at risk" children. Ann's many years of experience in the Montessori world motivated her to seek a way to provide a similarly rich Montessori environment for a broader community. In July 2003, she became the first recipient of a \$400,000 three-year grant from the Hiawatha Education Foundation to create a new Montessori school.

In August 2003, the newly appointed Board of Trustees convened to name the school and establish a mission: Bright Water Montessori School celebrates diversity, passion for learning and respect in an environment that nurtures and prepares the whole child for life. We recruited staff from September through November and located a school site in October. Bright Water's home became 1210 37th Ave. North in the Camden Pillsbury United Communities building in North Minneapolis. Bright Water maintains a positive relationship with Pillsbury United Communities and has become an affiliate member of this large non-profit organization. On February 17, 2004 Bright Water happily welcomed its first few children into the school. By the end of our first fiscal year we had 70% enrollment.

In the Fall of 2004 we opened with 87% enrollment and by the end of the school year, both the Children's House and the Toddler Community were full. It was a successful year and we had many families who participated in events and became bonded to the school. Parent Teacher conferences were held in October and in April with 95% of families attending. Ice Cream Socials were held at the beginning and end of the school year. Parent education events were held in the fall. We celebrated our first graduates in our end of the year fly up ceremony. The oldest children also created and performed in a Puppet Show for the community at our end of the year Social. It was a successful and exciting year for students and staff.

Our Summer session included both work in the classroom and fun in the neighborhood. We had lots of animal visitors, story telling and weekly library trips, plus trips to the park to play and swim. In the Fall of 2005 we look forward to opening another Children's House classroom.

Program Philosophy

Bright Water is a Montessori school and adheres to the philosophy of Maria Montessori. We believe in the power of the Montessori Method to engage and support children and their families, our staff, and the surrounding community. Bright Water Montessori School offers both half day and full day programs to meet the varying needs of its families. Our environments are Montessori "prepared environments," meaning that the structure and materials within the environment are developmentally appropriate, structured from within and sequentially ordered. The classrooms are beautiful, appealing and offer concrete materials for abstract concepts. The natural materials, the order and the calm atmosphere, as well as the

freedom with which the children move are striking to the observer. Children choose any materials on which they have previously received a lesson and they may work with that material for as long as they wish. Children are free to engage with each other, and may work in groups or by themselves. Visitors are impressed with the purposefulness and joy that children bring to choosing their work, and their happy and respectful interaction with each other in the classroom.

High quality Montessori programs like Bright Water must be available to those who will benefit most from the consistency and intelligence of a program that responds to the individual needs of the child. Montessori education is often considered available only to families who can afford to pay for the high costs of an excellent program. We believe that all children deserve the best early childhood education possible. Bright Water Montessori School seeks to serve all children, including those from low and middle-income families, and especially those who have the greatest economic and social needs. Bright Water Montessori School has a goal, which it is currently meeting, that at least two-thirds of its families will be eligible for and receive county and/or Bright Water scholarship assistance.

Our Families

From inception, Bright Water Montessori School has defined itself as a diverse community. We respect and nurture the whole child's ability to create him/herself in the context of his or her relationships, environment and community. To this end, we celebrate, accept and promote diversity that reflects the world and enables and fosters community citizenship. We strive to be diverse in many ways, including race, economics, sexual orientation, and belief systems. We promote tolerance and understanding through a diverse community of 75% people of color.

Bright Water Families are enthusiastic and involved. Several parents serve on the Bright Water Board of Trustees. Parents enthusiastically attend parent meetings, work days, parent-teacher conferences, and education events. We had 95% participation for our parent-teacher conferences held in the spring. Families have been generous in donations of time and talent and, when able, monetary donations.

Staff

Bright Water Montessori School is blessed with a dedicated and talented staff. Of the six who were founding members of the staff, four are still at the school. The staff members offer the children a wide range of expertise and a diverse group for the children to relate to. All head teaching staff members have AMI Montessori training and some also have AMS teacher training. Staff includes those who live in the neighborhood of the school, a bilingual teacher in Spanish and

English, and student interns from the charter high school who learn about the Montessori Method as well as effective ways to guide children. The school is in the process of becoming an accredited AMI school.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees of Bright Water Montessori School is directed by its president, Olivia Mastry. Olivia effectively directed the school through its first year and continues to serve in its second year. The Board not only helped create the mission statement and created by-laws and structure for the school, but also scrubbed, cleaned and created beautiful spaces. In February, Olivia guided us through a board retreat in which we defined ourselves, our mission, our vision, and who we serve. At our June meeting we thanked our Founding Board members for their faithful service, bid farewell to some members and welcomed new parents onto the board.

Board of Trustees for 2004-2005

Olivia Mastry, Chairperson
Colleen Cook, Treasurer until March
Steffanie Musich, current Treasurer
Ann Luce, Director of School
Elizabeth Badillo-Moorman
Beverly Cottman
Elizabeth Larsen
Martine Smaller
Tamara Valme

Financial Report

Bright Water Montessori School is dedicated to serving its children, families and employees in a fiscally responsible manner. The children's needs come first, including psychological, social, physical and intellectual needs. The security of the staff depends upon appropriate compensation for their service and dedication. The commitment and dedication of the staff directly relates to the comfort and security of the students. Financial health of the school depends on achieving and maintaining a balance among these needs through good stewardship of the school's resources. The Board hopes to achieve this through:

- ❖ **Being grounded in the present.** Bright Water Montessori School achieves its mission, in part, by operating under a sound, balanced budget with clear expectations regarding enrollment, staffing, compensation, capital replacement, fund development and growth.

- ❖ **Having a clear future vision.** Bright Water Montessori School has a future vision and a strong sense of how to build for and achieve its vision through long term goals, including a growing fund balance, tuition assistance, capital replacement and community partnership
- ❖ **Aligning decisions with mission.** All financial decisions will be aligned with and seek to achieve the School's mission, vision and long term goals.

Bright Water Montessori School has enlisted the help of MAP, the Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits. Our accountant is Jimelle Duncan. He has prepared the attached financial statements and report. Jimelle also assists the Board of Trustees in overseeing the School's financial health.

Bright Water Montessori School has been generous in giving scholarships to families who qualify. Approximately 40% of our families receive a scholarship of between 55 and 15% of their tuition, and 20% of our families are on child care assistance. Our greatest challenge will be to support families as our Hiawatha Education Foundation funding ends. We are working toward financial independence with the help of an amazingly supportive community of donors.

Thanks to all our contributors. We can never thank you enough for the hours and hours of time and effort you have put into making our environments beautiful and supporting the families and students of Bright Water Montessori School. Please accept our apologies and let us know if we have left your name out.



Senator Robert Kierlin visits with staff and children of Bright Water Montessori School.