



**INTERCULTURAL MONTESSORI
LANGUAGE SCHOOL**
Chicago, Illinois

HEAD OF SCHOOL
Start Date: July 2022
interculturalmontessori.org



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES



Intercultural Montessori Language School

Mission

Intercultural Montessori develops confident, multicultural, multilingual children who respect diversity and community and who are caring, capable, enthusiastic, and committed to a lifetime of learning.

Vision

Our vision is to inspire children to become citizens of the world. Intercultural Montessori develops students who speak a second language and thrive in culturally diverse environments. Our students emerge with the skills and passion to positively impact the global community.

OVERVIEW

Intercultural Montessori Language School is unlike any other. As its name suggests, it is BOTH a language immersion school AND a fully accredited Montessori school (AMS). Importantly, because all of the language faculty are native speakers of, respectively, Japanese, Mandarin, or Spanish, Intercultural students learn international cultures as well as a second language. Educating students on two campuses from age 2 through 8th grade, Intercultural is a vibrant, joyful learning community. Though a relatively young school—established in 2005—Intercultural already enjoys a solid reputation for building global consciousness and strengthening the international community.

The school's dual-language program provides families with the option for their children to experience Montessori education in addition to immersion in one of three languages: Japanese, Spanish, or Mandarin. Language learning and Montessori principles complement each other by encouraging curiosity while celebrating a multicultural community. Towards that end, the curriculum emphasizes self-directed exploration by the child, as well as thoughtful facilitation by the teacher. Intercultural faculty and families have found that these emphases develop capable, caring children who are free to explore their environment and who are also intrinsically motivated to learn. The powerful community at Intercultural is rooted in the Montessori mixed-age classrooms, which allow children to naturally develop confidence, independence, and citizenship. Within these thoughtfully-prepared and safe classrooms and across the broader school-wide community, teachers act as guides, presenting materials and adapting the learning environment to meet each child's individual needs.

Intercultural Montessori Language School seeks a new Head of School to begin July 1, 2022, as it enters its next chapter. Strong candidates will have a professional background that embraces our increasingly interconnected, global society, as well as show familiarity with the Montessori philosophy. Candidates will be ready to champion the merits of multilingual education and a diverse school community, as well as understand how to collaboratively build and support structures, policies, procedures, finances, and marketing and recruitment strategies to enable it to thrive for years to come. The new Head will be a

Fast Facts

Founded: 2005

Total students: 236

Students of color: approximately 70%

Total faculty: 44

Faculty of color: approximately 86%

Employees who speak 2 or more languages: 84%

Student/teacher ratio: typically 9:1

Operating Budget: approximately \$4M

Accredited by: American Montessori Society

strong communicator, an enthusiastic believer in the importance of multicultural/global understanding for today's children, an articulate advocate for the benefits of Montessori education, and an excellent culture-builder.

THE SCHOOL

Intercultural Montessori is a non-profit organization that began in Oak Park, Illinois and expanded to Chicago's West Loop neighborhood in 2009. Since then, the school has grown, adding a Middle School program in 2017 and a two-year-old program, licensed by DCFS, in 2020.

Intercultural's unique educational philosophy combines language learning with Montessori education; students are immersed in language and culture, while benefiting from the individualized, child-centered Montessori approach. (Students learn to speak, read, and write in Mandarin, Japanese, or Spanish, as well as English.) The curriculum intentionally helps all students increase verbal ability, enhance creativity, and grow mathematical problem-solving skills, as well as understand abstract concepts. Ultimately, this powerful combination of Montessori theory and language immersion yields students who are bilingual and biliterate, as well as prepared for the rigors of high school and beyond.

In following the theories of visionary educator and scientist, Dr. Maria Montessori, Intercultural allows students to move at their own pace through the curriculum and become curious, independent learners. Accordingly, the carefully prepared Montessori classroom environments nurture students' desire to learn at their own pace, and experienced teachers guide students to explore new topics and areas of curriculum. Doing so results in focused, confident individuals who are eager to take on new challenges with enthusiasm.

Intercultural's international teaching staff is comprised of Montessori certified, native speakers who are dedicated to celebrating culture in the classroom.



ACADEMICS

Little Apples (Age 2)

The Little Apples program is a language exploration program for the school's youngest students. The program allows the child to make a gentle transition from the family setting into the school community. Children learn by doing, and two-year-olds delight in learning to complete real-world tasks for themselves. Many Montessori activities are practical: setting the table for snack, washing dishes, and arranging flowers. The children practice and perfect these skills, increasing fine muscle coordination and concentration while gaining a sense of order. Little Apples play and learn together while developing the independence, confidence, and social skills that will prepare them for success in preschool.

Primary Program (Ages 3-6, Preschool & Kindergarten)

In the primary program, children build and refine their physical coordination and construct their intellect through practical life and sensorial activities. As children learn precision, logic, analysis, and classification, students develop the problem solving and critical thinking skills needed for higher level mathematics. Language and literacy are integrated into all areas of the primary curriculum. Children develop a diverse and wide-reaching vocabulary in English and their chosen target language (Mandarin, Spanish, or Japanese). They learn to sound out words, and as their curiosity for literature grows, reading begins. The Kindergarten year is designed to build on newly acquired skills and help the students consolidate prior knowledge as they prepare for their transition into lower elementary.

Music, art, and cultural subjects are part of students' daily experience and are woven throughout. All activities are designed to nurture self-confidence, concentration, and independence. Care and respect for self, others, and the environment are presented within the curriculum as students learn how to be good citizens in the classroom community. Primary students also enjoy a social lunchtime with teachers and friends and daily time outside.



Elementary Program (Lower Elementary—Grades 1-3, Ages 6-9 and Upper Elementary—Grades 4-6, Ages 9-12)

Across elementary, children progress to a new developmental plane and enter a rich world of learning. The development of social skills and the ability to make a positive impact on the communities to which one belongs are critical to the education of the elementary age child. Students grow towards a sense of investment both in their academic work as well as the work of creating a more positive world. With the guidance of the teachers, they structure their time and set their own learning goals. The curriculum is aligned to Common Core Standards but is delivered using the Montessori method.

At the lower elementary level, a target language teacher and an English teacher co-teach, delivering the curriculum in both languages. At the upper elementary level, students receive intensive target language instruction in small break-out groups with native-speaking target language teachers. The English and target language teachers collaborate in lesson planning and align the content of their instruction.

Elementary students become fluent and expressive readers and speakers through participation in a literature-rich environment and oral presentations. The math curriculum introduces students to the fundamentals of algebra, geometry, logic, and statistics, along with the principles of arithmetic, and is supported with tangible learning materials. The Montessori Elementary Science Curriculum (Cosmic Education) is based on an interdisciplinary approach which incorporates studies in geology, astronomy, biology, zoology, and botany. Students are introduced to experiments and fieldwork that give real meaning to this area of study. History incorporates Montessori's Five Great Lessons, through which students understand their own place in time and find personal connections to history. The cultural subjects are brought to life by field trips to the many museums and diverse neighborhoods in the Chicago area. Finally, visual art, music, and drama are woven into lessons and student projects, enhancing cultural studies.



Middle School (Grades 7-8, Ages 12-14)

Intercultural's Middle School program integrates the most current research on the developmental needs of early adolescents and the wisdom of Montessori philosophy. The curriculum is aligned with Illinois Common Core Standards but embraces a flexible, personalized approach to learning. With this foundation, the curriculum focuses on interdisciplinary themes and incorporates cooperative learning projects and community service. Learning extends outside the classroom with travel throughout the city and beyond. Middle School teachers are expert guides, helping students navigate complex academic topics, while promoting their independence and respecting their autonomy.

Ultimately, the goals of the Middle School program are to give students the knowledge and skills needed to excel in high school; achieve their personal vision for their future; and make a positive impact on the world. Consistently, Intercultural students are academically prepared and have the self-confidence and intrinsic motivation needed to succeed. Because they have mastered a second language, Intercultural students are uniquely poised to participate in the global community in meaningful ways.

CAMPUS

The Chicago Campus (Little Apples through Middle School) is located in the vibrant West Loop neighborhood of Chicago in a three-story masonry building that Intercultural purchased in 2015. The school occupies the first and second floors with 17 classrooms, a gymnasium, library, and multi-purpose room.

The West Loop neighborhood has grown and changed dramatically in the past 10 years. It has become increasingly international and is the perfect place to house a dual language school.



An additional Little Apples and Primary campus is located in the heart of Oak Park, a residential community approximately 10 miles from the West Loop campus. The facility has four large classrooms, a multi-purpose room, a beautiful outside playground, and a garden area. Beginning in 2021-22, the school will provide bus service for Oak Park graduate who wish to enroll in the elementary program in the West Loop.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Chicago is the third most populous city in the United States. With more than 2.7 million residents, it is the largest city in both the state of Illinois and the Midwest region. The extended Chicago metropolitan area is home to nearly 10 million residents. Located along Lake Michigan, Chicago is known as an international hub for art, finance, commerce, industry, technology, telecommunications, and transportation. O'Hare International is the second busiest airport in the world. Among the city's strengths is its large and diversified economy. It is also one of the most visited cities in the country.

Chicago is a highly livable city. The city is home to some of the nation's top universities, including the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago, Loyola University, DePaul University, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The city hosts sporting teams in each of the major professional leagues and has a vibrant arts community that includes The Art Institute of Chicago, Steppenwolf Theatre, the Goodman Theater, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Joffrey Ballet. Chicago is also well known as a center for live music, especially the blues, and for the long-running Second City comedy club. With its diversity of neighborhoods, plethora of restaurants, and cultural opportunities, Chicago is an excellent place to live and work.



Once an industrial meatpacking district, the West Loop has transformed into a destination for some of the best restaurants in Chicago, a hub for corporate headquarters, and the home of Greektown. Most visitors gravitate to Randolph Street—also known as Restaurant Row—and Fulton Market, full of restaurants and bars. The area also has many art galleries and boutique shops.

Less than 10 miles from the West Loop, Oak Park is a village with approximately 52,000 residents. Adjacent to Chicago, Oak Park is connected to the city with Chicago Transit Authority access via the Green Line and Blue Line “L” trains. Primarily residential, the village has the world’s largest collection of buildings designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who once lived and maintained his studio (now a national historic landmark) there. The novelist Ernest Hemingway was born and grew up in Oak Park; his birthplace is preserved, and the village has a museum devoted to him. Today, Oak Park is a diverse community with an active arts culture, a children’s museum, conservatory, and charming shopping and dining area.

SCHOOL STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The incoming Head of School will join a community with a fundamentally positive spirit and palpable sense of joy. The faculty culture is healthy, parents are supportive, and students are engaged. The blend of language immersion and Montessori pedagogy offers a compelling value proposition, and faculty and parents alike are drawn to Intercultural’s commitment to developing cross-cultural understanding, not just language instruction. The school has recently expanded programming to include two-year-olds and Middle School students, providing even more connection points for families. The entrepreneurial and can-do spirit of this relatively young school offers a strong foundation on which to build.



The following areas of opportunity were identified through our engagement with the community:

- Identifying, recruiting, and retaining mission-appropriate students; working actively to increase enrollment as COVID capacity guidelines evolve. Retention must be an area of focus for the upper elementary and middle school grades.
- Developing systems and processes that will mitigate the need for last minute planning.
- Fundraising, stewardship and nurturing of donors, creating a “culture of philanthropy.”
- Leading the school towards long-term financial sustainability by addressing the current debt load and engaging in financial analysis and modeling to understand the key levers of present and future budgets.
- Intentionally moving forward in work around diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Fostering deeper parent engagement and strengthening school / parent communication.
- Educating parents about the Montessori philosophy to enable them to be effective ambassadors, recruiters, and advocates for the school.
- Cultivating shared practices and community between campuses.
- Designing more robust co-curricular programs to augment excellent academics and support retention.
- Achieving high-school readiness while remaining true to Montessori principles in Middle School.
- Increasing professional development opportunities for faculty, beyond Montessori training.
- Building curriculum scope and sequence to foster curricular cohesion and smoother transitions between programs.
- Re-engineering the administrative structure and operating budget to facilitate optimal, sustainable staffing levels and developing an action plan for moving towards that sustainable structure.
- Reducing the turnover in faculty and continuing to attract and retain not only native language speakers and Montessori-trained faculty, but also those with the warmth and close student connections that are a hallmark of the school.
- Supporting the Board as it evolves in composition and scope.

DESIRED QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Successful candidates will have a background and skills that include most or all of the following:

Professional Qualifications

- Trained in Montessori pedagogy and/or possessing the heart and mindset of a Montessorian.
- Nuanced understanding of the business and operations dimensions of an independent school, including finance, admissions, communications, development, and organizational structure.
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy and the tactical skills necessary to manage the systems and processes necessary to implement strategy.
- A clearly articulated passion for and understanding of a multinational community and the benefits of language immersion. Previous experience with multinational and multilingual communities is desirable.
- Exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate with inspiration and clarity.
- A commitment to honoring multiple perspectives in order to maintain an authentic, inclusive community.
- Experience working in a best-practices relationship with a Board of Trustees.
- A proven “nose for talent”: able to identify, hire, motivate, evaluate, and retain excellent faculty and staff.

Leadership Style

- A style that is collaborative when possible and decisive when necessary, built on approachability, responsiveness, and transparent communication.
- Problem-solver; willingness to take thoughtful risks.
- The confidence and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite disagreement, and welcome feedback.

Personal Qualities

- Personal and professional commitment to understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion in a multinational faculty and student community.
- Eagerness to engage actively with employees, students, and parents, visible in the day-to-day life of the school.
- Warm, supportive, and relational.
- A sense of humor and playful spirit.

TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials via email as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position.
- A current résumé.
- A one-page statement of educational philosophy and practice that connects specifically to the school’s language immersion and Montessori identities.
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate’s permission)

Application materials should be directed to:

Skip Kotkins

Senior Consultant

skip.kotkins@carneysandoe.com

Marsha Little

Search Consultant

marsha.little@carneysandoe.com