



Welcome to Our New Progress Report!

Bloomington Montessori School
Fall 2020



Background and Context

Montessori's holistic educational model and use of scaffolding and portfolio assessment over a traditional grading system has many implications for the family experience, two of which are:

1. We care about the whole child and see the hierarchy of needs that must be met to both lay a foundation for successful academic acquisition, and also to recognize and nurture children's potential to be so much more--to be empowered, kind, problem-solving citizens that will change our world.
2. It also makes clear, effective communication of classroom progress much more complicated. This is a problem for which finding solutions is the cutting edge of Montessori today. (Two options--grades or something totally new designed authentically, from the ground up, using Montessori principles. Parent experience--data and trust)

Portrait of a Graduate

We began working with Katie Ibes, from Grow Wise Consulting, in 2018, and she challenged us to “work backward”. She walked our staff through the creation of a “portrait of a graduate”. Who do we hope our students will be as adults?

We’re going to do that exercise together today. I am going to set a timer for 2 minutes. Jot down some one-word ideas of who you want your child to be as an adult. Choose one to put in the chat.

Learner Outcomes

<http://bloomingtonmontessori.org/programs-curriculum/learner-outcomes/>

- Autonomy and Independence
- Confidence and Competence
- Academic Preparation
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Social Responsibility
- Spiritual Awareness

Benchmark Guide

Learner outcomes create goals, but now what? To use these goals to fuel our curriculum, we need to directly correlate our data collection to them, including collecting baseline data and periodic new data to track progress toward goals.

How does one measure holistic learner outcomes? One breaks them down into measurable or observable skills. For math this is more black-and-white. For intrinsic motivation, it can be more complicated.

However, the path to competency with anything looks the same. Concrete, simplified activities and lessons are given, mastered, and fuel more complex and abstract lessons on a “spiral” continuum of student experiences. Concepts are revisited in greater depth and sophistication. The Benchmark Guide outlines this “spiral”.

Benchmark Guides

BMS Benchmark Guide-shows the “spiral” of development of concepts over the nine years but is a lot to look at.

<http://bloomingtonmontessori.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BMS-Benchmark-Guide-1.pdf>

Benchmark Guides by level allow parents to focus on their child’s current plane of development.

<http://bloomingtonmontessori.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UPPER-ELEMENTARY-BMS-Benchmark-Guide-9-29-20.pdf>

<http://bloomingtonmontessori.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/LOWER-ELEMENTARY-BMS-Benchmark-Guide-9-29-20.pdf>

<http://bloomingtonmontessori.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EARLY-CHILDHOOD-BMS-Benchmark-Guide-9-29-20.pdf>

Montessori prides itself in individualization, and therefore the benchmark guides are not written as a calendar of lessons for each year. They are written as milestones we work toward children achieving by their EXITING YEAR of a program.

Benchmark Guides--why third year only?

Early Childhood benchmarks are written for (typical) kindergarten milestones.

Lower Elementary benchmarks are written for (typical) third grade milestones.

Upper Elementary benchmarks are written for (typical) sixth grade milestones.

To map them out on a specific timeline is a detriment to “following the child”.
Children blossom at different times in the journey of each developmental plane.
(reading Title I example)

However, to not clearly communicate where a child has atypical strength and interest, or where they may be atypically struggling, is also detrimental.

Benchmark Guide-Outcomes, Categories, Skills

Interpersonal Skills

- Social Responsibility
- Social Justice
- Global Citizenship
- Environmental Stewardship

Intrapersonal Skills

- **Autonomy & Independence**
 - Emotional Self-regulation
 - Self-control
 - Independent Choices
- **Confidence and Competence**
 - Work habits
 - Self-advocacy
 - Strong self-concept
- **Intrinsic Motivation**
 - Growth Mindset
 - Embracing Challenge
 - Flow/Concentration
- **Spiritual Awareness**
 - Mindfulness
 - Interdependence
 - Awe and Reverence

Benchmark Guide-Outcomes, Categories, Skills

Cosmic Education

- History
- Geography
- Biology
- Physical Science
- Engineering
- Great Lessons (aka Cosmic Stories, Elementary)
- Economics (Upper Elementary)

Reading

- Concepts of Print
- Phonemic Awareness
- Decoding
- Fluency
- Comprehension

Language Arts

- Letter Formation
- Mechanics
- Word Study
- Grammar
- Writing Structure
- Writing for a Purpose

Benchmark Guide-Outcomes, Categories, Skills

Geometry

- Sensorial (EC only, category?, essential foundational skills)
 - Dimensional
 - Visual
 - Auditory
 - Tactile
 - Olfactory and Gustatory
- Foundational Concepts (LE)
- Line
- Shape
- Form
- Tools

Arithmetic

- Numeration
- Place Value
- Operations
- Mathematical Mind
- Applied Mathematics
- Fractions, Decimals, and Percents
- Money
- Radicals and Exponents
- Data and Graphing
- Algebra
- Measurement
- Time

Benchmark Guide-Outcomes, Categories, Skills

Fine Arts

- Music
- Visual Arts
- Performance Arts

Soon we would also like to complete Physical Education and Spanish so as to have the whole of our curriculum represented. This is a goal for 2022.

Progress Report

FACTS allows us to design our own progress reports and build our own skill sets. We have used the benchmark categories. Comment boxes are used to describe details of progress within a category when needed.

Because we do not use grades, a key will be used:

A=Area for practice

P=Practicing at a Developmentally Appropriate Level

D=Demonstrating competency

There will also still be space for the narratives about our children that we cherish, where teachers can enter individualized insights.

Progress Report

We discussed that benchmarks are written for the exit year of each program level. This does not mean the teacher is measuring the first grader as failing the third-year benchmarks. The teacher knows where child should be within the three year spiral of their level, and the progress report will show that they are “on track” to meet these goals. The progress report of a typical student will mostly show “Ps”, which mean practicing at a developmentally appropriate level. Over the course of the nine years, a child will never be “done” with fractions, they will be practicing them in greater depth, constantly revisiting them in new and more sophisticated ways. If a child is atypically struggling on the continuum of fraction knowledge, one would see an “A”, which the key will show means the teacher has identified this as an area in which the child needs additional practice, lessons, and other interventions to stay “on track” with fractions learning. Occasionally there are skills that do not need revisited, such as letter formation, and one may see a “D” for “demonstrating competency”, to note the child is ready to move on from practicing this, or that this is an area of exceptional skill.

Progress Reports

Progress reports will be sent in the week leading up to Parent/Teacher conferences each semester.

Please read it carefully BEFORE your conference. The narrative is the best insight on your teacher's perceptions of your child's gifts, challenges, and progress.

The skills section breaks down data to allow for parents to target their questions or comments about what may be happening in the classroom. It is the distillation of the teacher's data collection, observation, portfolio assessment, student-teacher conversations/conferencing, etc.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Please read your progress report carefully as soon as you can after receiving it, and note areas you would like clarified or would like to share your own observations with the teacher.

If you feel like you may have a “big” question, or important information that your teacher might not be expecting, the most effective thing is to send this to the teacher in advance (as soon as you can after reading the progress report) so that they can prepare to address your question effectively. They may need to collect data or simply think through a thoughtful response vs. “answering on the spot”. They may also ask that something “very big” be scheduled for a separate meeting where it can be given the time it needs.

If you have the opportunity to outline your agenda at the beginning of your conference, this helps teachers judge how much time to give each topic and may lead to prioritization of some topics over others, or setting a follow-up meeting if things are left unaddressed.

Classroom Communication

Remember questions and concerns need not wait for Parent/Teacher conferences. Teachers will communicate with you directly as needed and you should always feel free to email your teacher with a question or ask for a meeting. In typical years, we are so fortunate to have a personal touch-point with parents each day at the door, where often a brief, private meeting can occur. We hope to get back to that soon.

In the meantime, we are so grateful to be on your team, in support of your child, and we want you to know that we are available and want to have a dialog about your experience.

COVID Caveat

Last year was intended to begin our in-house field-testing phase for the benchmarks. Implementation in the classroom can look very different than work with a consultant in a conference room.

With the spring semester interruptions, we wondered if we should extend the testing window. However, now more than ever parents and teachers need tools to keep their team communication active and effective for the benefit of the children.

Therefore, we're rolling them out AND still examining them for needed changes...please grant us some grace.

Q&A

