

Bloomington Montessori

Early Childhood Learner Outcome Benchmarks

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Rationale

From 2018 to 2020, Bloomington Montessori School worked with Grow Wise Consulting to develop school-wide benchmarks related to our learner outcomes. The goals of this project included:

- *clear communication of learner outcomes to parents*
- *tools to communicate effectively between teachers and other educational professionals regarding student expectations and progress*
- *development of benchmarks that authentically reflect Montessori philosophy and BMS's holistic learner outcomes*
- *to aid in the effective collection of data at the student, classroom, and school levels for the purpose of informing instruction and to ensure accountability*

- *to help ensure consistency between classrooms and smooth transitions between program levels within the school*
- *to create consensus around goals for typical students and help facilitate discussions around implementation of student services for those who need extra support*

We wanted to reflect holistic benchmarks that represented application opportunities instead of isolated skills, and that honored the complete development of a child (not only academics). Data is collected to help us assess and track benchmark progress. Data sources in a Montessori environment include:

- *Student work (projects, research, work journals, portfolios)*
- *Observation*
- *Teacher records*
- *Cumulative student files*
- *Informal assessments*
- *Standardized tests (annual for grades 3-6)*

It is important to note that these benchmarks are written to represent the classroom goals for a “typical” child in their third year of each program level. It is not cause for alarm if a child is still working on a few of the benchmarks at the end of the three year cycle. It simply informs the next teacher regarding where to focus learning. However, if a child is struggling to demonstrate competency with a significant number of benchmarks, this may be a reason for teachers and parents to begin discussions about the need for additional classroom supports, an Accommodation Plan, or Individualized Service Plan (see Student Services in the BMS Parent Handbook). Please remember that continual teamwork and communication is the best support for the success of any student.

*Benchmarks are written to reflect experiential lessons and essential lessons. Experiential lessons are lessons that are taught, practiced, assessed, and moved past within the curriculum. Essential lessons are those skills or take-aways that are deemed vital and which are assessed for long-term retention throughout their time at BMS. In each area of the curriculum, these essential benchmarks are **bolded**.*

Learner Outcomes

In our effort to offer the highest quality Montessori educational experience, Bloomington Montessori has adopted the following Learner Outcomes (as outlined by the American Montessori Society [Standard 4.2]). These Learner Outcomes serve as a framework with which to discuss our vision for and efforts toward the holistic development of the children we serve.

It is important for our stakeholders to be aware of these Learner Outcomes for many reasons, including:

- To better understand the mission of Bloomington Montessori School and the role it serves in our community
- To prepare families for BMS's expectation of support by families in the development of these skills and values
- To better understand the context within which teachers will be discussing a child's progress through our curriculum

These six learner outcomes are complex topics, each involving multiple stages of growth and learning. Our goal, through our spiraling curriculum, is to develop these skills to an age-appropriate level throughout a child's nine year experience here. Graduates of Bloomington Montessori build the tools necessary to continue this developmental journey long after graduation.

Autonomy and Independence

The word "autonomy" finds its roots in the concept of "self-governing". In a Montessori context, this includes the ability to maintain control over one's actions, feel confident making independent choices, and have a strong sense of self.

Confidence and Competence

The self-assurance that comes from recognizing and having faith in one's own abilities and talents is one of the most empowering tools we can offer children. Through a greater sense of ownership of their own achievements, children become energized by their own capability.

Academic Preparation

As in most schools, we have a strong belief in children's need to be prepared with knowledge and skills that will enable them to navigate education and life successfully. This includes a well-rounded curriculum of language, mathematics, biology, physical science, geography, and history. Additionally, we focus on process-centered goals such as the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving, work habits, and creativity. (See Scope and Sequence for detailed information.)

Intrinsic Motivation

To find the work of life internally satisfying creates a drive that propels children toward productivity and success in all areas as they grow. By avoiding extrinsic motivations (such as rewards and punishments), we leave space for this vital inner development of the child.

Social Responsibility

The idea that we each should strive to benefit society and care for ourselves, each other, and the Earth instills children with a sense of stewardship. Our Cosmic Curriculum explores the interconnection of all living things, encouraging the development of environmentally aware global citizens.

Spiritual Awareness

Spiritual awareness is a process by which we explore our own being and thoughts. We help children develop a sense of mindfulness, purpose, and possibility. This includes development of growth mindset and comfort with self-reflection.

BENCHMARK GUIDES

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Early Childhood

Social Responsibility

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

(Care of others)

- **address conflicts by identifying the trigger and using words to communicate feelings.**

- demonstrate sympathy for children who are upset or hurt by asking if they are okay or offering to help.
- help children who ask for help.
- take turns speaking in conversations.
- follow agreements of the classroom intended to respect ourselves, each other, and the physical environment.

Social Justice

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- listen to and discuss age-appropriate stories about people from a variety of backgrounds, races, ethnicities, religions, family structures, etc.
- notice and discuss that we all have different eyes, smiles, skin tones, and hair; they are all beautiful, and they are part of the tapestry of our personal stories.

Global Citizenship

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- listen to and discuss stories about people from a variety of geographic, religious, and political backgrounds.

Environmental Stewardship

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

(Care of Environment)

- work to care for their classroom by cleaning up after themselves and volunteering to help with communal tasks.

(Appreciation for Nature)

- demonstrate interest in and respect for nature.
- help care for classroom plants or pets.
- reduce waste by composting food scraps and recycling paper.

INTRAPERSONAL

Early Childhood

Autonomy & Independence

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

(Emotional Self-Regulation)

- identify when they are upset and express verbally to a peer or teacher.
- demonstrate self-soothing strategies when upset.

(Self-Control)

- use appropriate body and voice for a variety of situations (group, outside play, lunch, work time).
- wait patiently for snack or materials.
- resist aggressive urges.

(Independent Choices)

- transition from one choice to the next independently.
- make work choices based on interests, with prompting when needed.
- demonstrate creativity through extensions beyond the basic use of materials.

(Care of Self)

- Gain autonomy with meeting one's needs (dressing, blowing nose, tying shoe)
- Advocate for oneself appropriately when needing assistance to fulfill needs

Confidence & Competence

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

(Work Habits)

- **consistently complete a successful work cycle (choose a work, do the work, put the work away).**

(Self-Advocacy)

- ask “three before me” to demonstrate the ability to seek help.

(Strong Self-Concept)

- name some things they are good at and some things at which they would like to be better.

Intrinsic Motivation

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

(Growth Mindset)

- verbalize the importance of trying hard and the knowledge that it will make them stronger.
- Express growth mindset through use of the word “yet”. (“I don’t know how to do that *yet*.”)

(Embracing Challenge)

- choose challenging works and persist, problem solve, and persevere.

(Flow/Concentration)

- regularly demonstrate natural concentration in activities.
- demonstrate curiosity and engagement with specific topics of interest.

Spiritual Awareness

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

(Mindfulness)

- reflect verbally on their actions.

(Interdependence)

- help their community and receive help from their community.
- collaborates in positive relationships with adults

(Awe and Reverence)

- demonstrate a love for nature through interest in playing outside and examination of natural objects.

COSMIC EDUCATION

Early Childhood

Maria Montessori urged us to give children a “vision of the universe” to help them discover how all of its parts are interconnected and interdependent, and to help them understand their place in society and the world...through [the integration] of astronomy, chemistry, biology, geography, and history. These lessons help children become aware of their own roles and responsibilities as humans and as members of society, and help them explore their “cosmic task”—their unique, meaningful purpose in the world.’

History

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- demonstrate understanding of the passage of time by using words such as “last year, yesterday, tomorrow”.
- participate in birthday celebrations that demonstrate that each year of life is an orbit of Earth around the Sun and how the child has changed over time.

Geography

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- create a booklet of their cosmic address.
- discuss the continents and some special facts about each continent.
- celebrate with customs and songs from a variety of cultures.
- identify 5 basic landforms when shown a material.
- Name or sing the 8 planets in order from the Sun.
- create a map of the continents and oceans of the world.
- create a map of a continent and its countries.
- identify the current season and its characteristics and that seasons change and are a cycle, and appropriate clothing for each season.
- identify morning, day, afternoon, evening, and night and that this is a cycle.

Biology

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

¹ American Montessori Society, “Montessori Terminology”
<https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/What-Is-Montessori/Terminology>

- classify picture cards as living/non-living, plant/animal/mineral, and vertebrate/invertebrate.
- sort picture cards into 5 classes of vertebrates.
- create a diagram of external parts of animals from different classes, including correct nomenclature.
- create a diagram of external parts of trees, flowers, and leaves.
- actively engage in hands-on experiences in nature as a touchstone for new academic knowledge
- use a material to map a life cycle of a plant or animal.

Physical Science

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- make observations, predictions, and draw conclusions through activities designed around a variety of scientific concepts (such as float/sink, magnetism, and balances).

Engineering

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- design and construct a structure that embodies pattern, symmetry, and balance.
- build with a variety of materials with different weights, shapes, and dimensions.

READING

Early Childhood

Concepts of Print

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **Demonstrate understanding that print moves from left to right and top to bottom by tracking with their eyes or finger**
- **Verbally differentiate between a letter, word, and sentence when shown and explain that words are made of letters and sentences are made of words**
- **List the vowels of the alphabet**
- Uses picture and context clues to aid in understanding of texts
- Identify the title, author, and illustrator of a book and their purposes
- Differentiate between fiction and nonfiction

Phonemic Awareness

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **Verbally identify and produce rhyming words**
- **Verbally manipulate words by changing, adding, or deleting the initial, medial, final sound or rime of a given word**
- **Name and identify the sounds most commonly associated with the letters of the alphabet when shown both upper and lower case letters**
- **Identify the number of sounds, order of sounds, and isolated sounds of words with three phonemes when shown a word or picture**
- **Identify short vowel sounds associated with each vowel**

Decoding

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **Blend CVC three-letter words when shown the word in print**
- **Break down a three-phoneme word into sounds and represent with appropriate letters in writing when given a picture or verbal word**
- **Read emergent reader texts (F&P level D) with appropriate pace and demonstrating self-correction and comprehension strategies**
- **Verbally read 20 high-frequency sight words when shown the word in a list (https://lincs.ed.gov/readingprofiles/Dolch_Basic.pdf)**

Fluency

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **Read emergent texts (F&P level D) in 2-3 word phrases, such as with pattern reading**
- Reflect awareness of sentences in reading by pausing at ending punctuation

Comprehension

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- Discuss stories read together or aloud including asking and answering questions about key details, retelling stories, identifying elements (such as characters, setting, problem, solution, events, nonfiction concepts), making predictions, and comparing stories
- identify supporting details of an idea in a nonfiction text, applying appropriate vocabulary and paraphrasing.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Early Childhood

Letter Formation

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **legibly write in manuscript, including both capital and lowercase letters.**
- **write from left to right and top to bottom.**

Mechanics

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **capitalize the first letter of a sentence and names.**
- **end sentences with a period.**

Word Study

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **spell three letter short-vowel words when shown a picture or given a word verbally.**

Grammar

- describe the role of a noun and verb, identify the part of speech of given familiar nouns and verbs, and generate their own examples.

Writing Structure

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **write original and paraphrased sentences that include a subject and predicate, with inventive spelling, demonstrating knowledge of letter sounds.**

Writing for a Purpose

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- paraphrase text resources and lessons to generate short non-fiction writing about a research topic.
- journal using a combination of sentences, pictures, and words.
- create posters to convey information on a given topic.
- tell stories that go along with a drawn or given picture that include characters and events.

- with support, complete simple revisions to written work.

ARITHMETIC

Early Childhood

Numeration

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **demonstrate concept of “zero” with counters.**
- **combine and count items to demonstrate understanding of + and =.**
- **compare two sets of numbers, identifying “larger” and “smaller” quantities.**
- **read and copy a number up to 9,999 represented with materials/numerals.**
- **count verbally and write legibly numbers 1-20.**
- **identify, order, and name numbers up to 100 with materials.**
- **skip count by 10’s to 100, 2’s to 20, and 5’s to 50.**

Place Value

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **exchange materials for equivalent quantities within place values of units through thousands.**
- **given number cards, students can provide the associated quantity (with materials) of the numeral of any number up to 9,999.**

Operations

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **students can accurately complete static addition with the golden bead materials.**
- **students can explain or demonstrate that multiplication is adding sets of a number (with materials).**
- **students can explain or demonstrate that subtraction is “taking away” (with materials).**
- **students find addition facts up to 10 +10 with materials and recognize combinations of 10.**

Mathematical Mind

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- demonstrate willingness to estimate answers to math problems.
- **complete the pattern, count on, or identify “one more” or “one less” when given a set of numbers.**

Applied Mathematics

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **count everyday objects and answer “how many”.**

Fractions, Decimals, and Percents

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- explain and demonstrate with materials that a fraction is less than a whole.
- name fractions up to one fourth when shown a material representation.

Money

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- identify the name and value of a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, and one dollar bill.

Radicals and Exponents

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- identify the relationship demonstrated by the squaring chains (ie 7 sevens).
- manipulate the square and cube chains of the bead cabinet to create a square or stack a cube.

Data and Graphing

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- differentiate materials by length.
- manipulate materials laid out in a grid.

Algebra

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- sensorially solve the binomial and trinomial cube puzzles.

Measurement

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- demonstrate understanding that various qualities of an object or set of objects can be measured by use of an appropriate tool.

- read numerals on the digital thermometer and associate them with weather-appropriate clothing.
- **identify which of two items is “longer” or “shorter” using visual discrimination.**
- **identify which of two items is “heavier” or “lighter” using their hands or a balance.**

Time

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- **differentiate between day and night or morning and afternoon.**
- **associate changes in temperate forest (local) nature with the seasons.**
- **verbally tell time to the hour when looking at an analog or digital clock face.**
- **name the months of the year, days of the week, and four seasons in order.**

GEOMETRY

Early Childhood

Sensorial (Essential Foundational Skills)

Maria Montessori (1967, p.145) said that sensorial training “makes a man an observer.” Neuroscientist Dee Coulter (2007) asserts that what makes a person brilliant is his or her ability to pay attention to details that others have missed...If the refined senses allow us to observe astutely and completely, it is clear that this is an integral part of the development of the mind. The sensorial area is perhaps the most distinct part of the Montessori classroom...it is based on Montessori’s theory that refinement of the senses is integral to future education (Montessori, 1967).

These essential foundational skills nurtured through the sensorial curriculum build a sense of organization that helps children make sense of their world, and are the precursors to more complex categorization, gradation, differentiation, and matching necessary in many studies. These observational skills must be developed before more advanced categorization of one’s world (biology, geometry, grammar, etc.) can be effectively learned.²

Dimension

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- demonstrate differentiation, gradation, matching, and combination of dimension by manipulating a variety of objects (such as the pink tower, brown stair, and knobless cylinders).

Visual

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- match and grade color hues.

Auditory

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- differentiate, grade, and match sounds.

² Eve Cusack, “Sensorial Rationale”, 2007

- use bells or other instruments to create, match, and grade pitches.
- make and observe silence.

Tactile

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- differentiate and grade objects by texture, temperature, and weight.
- identify familiar objects using only the sense of touch (stereognostics).

Olfactory and Gustatory

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- match samples by scent or taste.
- categorize samples by taste.

Geometric Shape

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- exploration of shapes and combinations of shapes with geometry boxes (such as the triangle, hexagon, and rectangular boxes).

Geometric Form

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- name geometric solids.
- build the binomial cube.

FINE ARTS

Early Childhood

Music

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- Create higher and lower pitches in a limited range with instruments and voice when guided with example sounds
- echo, create, and play melodic patterns with voice and instruments
- echo, create, and play 4-beat rhythmic patterns with body percussion or instruments
- maintain a steady beat in a group
- sing short memorized songs
- experience a variety of live and recorded music

Visual Arts

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- discuss (with appropriate vocabulary) a variety of visual arts
- express personal ideas, interests, and feelings through art
- demonstrate thoughtfulness and care when creating art
- manipulate a variety of tools such as brushes, scissors, and glue applicators to create art
- use a variety of mediums to create art
- identify shapes and form in art (2D, 3D)
- experiment with and discuss color relationships (primary and secondary colors)

Performance Arts

After their third year in a BMS Early Childhood classroom, **students can:**

- experience live theater
- perform a skit or song for a group
- use movement to enhance a song