



The Brandon
Montessori School
AT RIVER HILLS

The Riverview
Montessori School
AT RIVERCREST

Annual Report

Third Edition, Fall 2011

Our Vision:

To be the premier early
childhood education program in the
Tampa Bay area.

Two Great Locations, One Single Commitment to Excellence.

A Note From The President

“Education must no longer be regarded only as a matter of teaching children, but as a social question of the highest importance, because it is the one question that concerns all mankind.”

Maria Montessori

Guided by the vision of Maria Montessori, we continue to honor her work within our classrooms. In this Annual Report, our third edition, we spotlight the year’s achievements and share our school goals for the upcoming year. My wish is for you (our families) to stay informed of the news that directly affects you and your child.

I’m in awe each year as I reflect on our schools’ accomplishments. This past year, we focused on quality enhancements



within the classrooms. We added advanced literary materials, honed our Reading and Writing Program, and added a Rhythm Class to spark the children’s natural love of music.

We continued to stress community involvement. Children participated in our Annual Trike-A-Thon, teachers and families joined our Relay For Life walk, and we collectively adopted *A Kids Place*, contributing ser-

vices and donations to support the child victims placed there.

We embarked on our school-wide “green” effort. This year’s school yearbook went digital, capturing the children in beautiful digital photos.

I am more proud today than ever of our children’s astounding growth: in their subject knowledge, communication and social interactions.

I’m equally proud of the cooperative relationships we have built between parents and the schools. BMS and RMS provide a holistic, collaborative learning environment where children, teachers and families all do our part to ensure the children’s continued success. It is our united pas-

sion for children and their development that drives us each day to provide them the very best. I hope you feel as inspired, as I do, to share in our children’s exciting journey together! Thank you for sharing your precious children with us!

Report Highlights

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A New Chapter

Starting this school year, we welcomed Ms. Angie Sokari Aziz back to our Executive Team. Ms. Angie graciously accepted The Riverview Montessori School Director position, after returning from her husband's US Marine Corps tour of duty. Ms. Angie originally served



as BMS Director and Executive Director, 2003-2006. Ms. Angie's Montessori Teaching Certification, Political Science Degree and multilingual skills, combined with

her passion for education and BMS/RMS experience, have already served the children extremely well. Our founding RMS Director, Ms. Lisa Auza returned home to Arizona this summer. We are sad to see her go, but are comforted to know that she is near her family. Ms. Lisa was the driving force behind our school's growth. Her skills and leadership directly resulted in the successful implementation of our Elementary Program, our Young Children's Program, and our Summer VPK Program. Parents in every classroom consistently praised the school, a testimony to Lisa's work.

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BMS/RMS Executive Team [Angie Sokari Aziz, Sherri DeFelice, Rohini Rustogi, Laurie March]

Ms. Angie joins ranks with our distinguished Ms. Rohini, President & CEO, Ms. Sherri, Business Manager, and Ms. Laurie, Director of BMS. These ladies are incredibly talented and passionate about children's education. The BMS/RMS Executive Team remains strong and will take our schools into the next generation!

Valuing Family

"The relationship between the family, the teacher and the children must be harmonious because the school environment plays a larger part than it did before."

Maria Montessori

We believe connection to family is vitally important, more today than ever before. Our BMS/RMS Executive Team purposely plans family events and parent/grandparent volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Long-time favorite activities include the Art Volunteer Program, Great American Teach-In, Fall Family Concert & Feast, Book Fair, Trike-A-Thon, and Relay For Life are a few opportunities for family participation.

Less obvious to the children, but especially appreciated by parents, are the schools' financial incentives for families. Intended to give more

families an opportunity to experience Montessori, we offer tuition discounts for educators and military members, scholarships for qualifying families and staff members, and now 50% sibling registration discounts. We feel every child should have the Montessori advantage!

Family participation and input from our parents have been a cornerstone of our schools since we opened. Our school uniforms were adopted based upon feedback from our original families and have remained a parent preference ever since. As well, we continually assess the needs of our families and have designed new programs specifically to address those changing needs. To keep families informed, we have incorporated weekly newsletters, monthly calendars, quarterly report cards and parent/teacher conferences. All of these efforts are di-

rectly driven by feedback from our families.

Ultimately, we view the long-term success of BMS/RMS as a partnership between our families and our school. This relationship is a two-way path of trust that we cherish very dearly. We value you, our loyal families, and welcome your input. Together we can positively affect our children's love of learning.



Families share in the children's excitement during our Annual Spring Art Exhibit and Open House

Editorial

Montessori - The Best Kept Secret. I am continually surprised and saddened to meet people who are unfamiliar with the Montessori Method of teaching. How can a 100 year old, proven international education system not be known to every adult, or at the very least, every parent? I was introduced to The Brandon Montessori School over eight years ago. My husband and I wanted our 2 year old to have the best possible developmental opportunities. I took a tour of BMS, guided by then Director, Ms. Angie Sokari Aziz. The classroom was beautifully furnished with multi-sensory, self-correcting materials. I witnessed young children happily working on math, writing and geography. They didn't mind me visiting, and one little boy politely came up to me, asking me my name. I could not believe these were four and five year olds! I rushed home eager to tell my husband about my find! Now, seven years later, both of my daughters have graduated from BMS and have continued their joy of learning. They delight in discovering new things, in developing their unique skills, and building their inner confidence. My husband and I observe daily our daughters' independence and their need for increased responsibility within our family. I am certain my daughters' Montessori foundation at BMS will take them far as they follow their curiosity. Please join me and others in spreading the word about the clear advantages of Montessori education for children. By informing



our community and demanding Montessori education, we can directly impact the success of our children, and their future!

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

We celebrated another outstanding year in our schools. We are grateful for our families and community who continue to embrace our School Year Program and also our Summer VPK Program, as reflected again by record enrollments.

Our children accomplished remarkable feats. From 2 1/2 to 8 years old, children mastered the skill of completing an exercise from beginning to end, cultivated their innovative thinking, challenged the status quo, and grew their inner confidence. The results speak for themselves:

- ◆ K - 2nd Grade exceeded weekly Accelerated Reading (AR) Goals, improving reading comprehension and fluency
- ◆ VPK students scored 100% on the ECHOS and 95% on the FAIR [tests designed to evaluate literacy and academic readiness]
- ◆ 2nd Grade students scored above the National Average on SAT exams in Reading, Science and Math

All of these accomplishments are a tribute to our Montessori environment and to our unparalleled teaching team.

So what happens when BMS and RMS graduates have to move on? How do our students fair in their new schools? Our students have experienced advanced grade placement, have been selected for math competitions and regional science demonstrations, and many have been recognized for academic achievement awards. We know this because so many of our graduates and families have returned to say, "Thank you!"

Another hallmark of our schools has been our continuous focus on quality school improvement. This year we were awarded our formal American Montessori Society five



Aug 2011 - BMS & RMS Faculty prepare for the upcoming school year

year reaccreditation, after a two year in-depth self study and peer review process. Also furthering our schools' commitment to Hillsborough County's Early Education Service, we joined Quality Counts for Kids, a voluntary continuous improvement program.

For this 2011-2012 school year, we are focusing on educational excellence of our teachers. Faculty are participating in professional development workshops specifically designed for BMS and RMS. As well, highly qualified Montessori Teacher Interns have been integrated within our classrooms, merging their new ideas with our proven practices.

Also for this new school year, we are furthering our environmental commitment through efficient recycling. School-wide we will use less paper and recycle within classrooms. Digital publications (Parent Handbook, School Calendar and weekly Newsletters) are already available on our school website.

For the upcoming year, we are thrilled to announce the development of our newest Montessori School! Nestled within Apollo Beach's Waterset Community, our third school will break ground next spring. We're pleased to be able to offer Montessori to Apollo Beach and Ruskin families. The proximity to I-75 will also make it convenient for parents who commute to Tampa from neighboring towns.

This promises to be another stellar year at our schools!

Top Teachers

We are pleased to continue the tradition of our Teacher of the Year Award within our schools. With each passing year, the caliber of teaching talent increases, making it difficult to choose just one. For the 2010-2011 School Year, we announced Ms. Maria Ymaz at RMS and Ms. Sedoina Momparler at BMS as our Teachers of the Year. These ladies truly deserved this special recognition for their exemplary skills and unwavering dedication to the children.

Ms. Maria's Young Children's Class completed its first full school year. Maria's innovative teaching, strong leadership and nurturing demeanor prepared 25 two year olds to progress to the Pre-primary Classroom. A true professional, Maria completed her formal Montessori training and her classroom intern experience, earning her Montessori Preprimary Teacher Certification.



At BMS, Ms. Sedoina took the Reading and Writing Program to the next level.



Her thoughtfully developed lesson plans had children excited and engaged. By Sedoina's sheer talent and commitment to the children's growth, she earned a Lead Teacher position at BMS this year!

We are proud of these dedicated educators who put children before self. They were recognized during graduation and presented with a bonus check and personal plaque. Please join us in congratulating these very talented ladies!

VPK Scores Big

Our BMS/RMS Summer VPK Program once again raised the bar. Scoring a remarkable 98% Kindergarten Readiness Rate, our VPK graduates entered Kindergarten expressly prepared for their increased challenges.

Within our community, the word has spread about our high caliber program. Enrollment was closed within six weeks due to families flocking in as soon as they heard we had begun enrolling for this year's program.

What sets our VPK Program apart, is a fine balance of the Montessori Method blended with traditional teaching. The students come away with a very well-rounded experience. Talented Florida Certified Teachers and Montessori Assistants exchange professional knowl-

edge and share their techniques. Officials of the Early Learning Coalition referred to our program as "superb", stating it was a "model example" for other schools to follow. If your child is entering Kindergarten in the fall, and has not attended a VPK program, then he/she is eligible for our **free** Summer VPK. Inquire now!



A Culture of Giving

Woven in to the fabric of our Montessori school tapestry is an underlying social and moral foundation: it is the respect for others, through words and actions.

This past year, our students, teachers, and families rallied together reaching out to those in need. Our BMS & RMS families and friends generously contributed \$3,000 during our Annual Fall Trike-A-Thon to help Paige Trotman, diagnosed with Leukemia. Today, Paige is doing well and is growing her hair back (lost as a result from the potent medications). "You are angels! Every day I give thanks for the help that you have given us!" stated Frances Trotman, Paige's mom. The photo (at right) is Paige on the left with her family.

Our school faculty and families stepped



up yet again. We adopted *A Kids Place* preschool, supplying them with new school supplies and new lesson ideas, from our own Montessori teachers. In the spring, we joined forces for our annual Relay For Life walk for cancer. Students collected \$600 in coins alone! Teachers and parents joined our Team, walking and raising dollars. Nearly \$3,100 was collected for cancer research.

These lessons all have a common thread: the gift of giving selflessly from the heart. Let us all learn from our children, and continue to build a community of compassionate individuals.

Concluding Thoughts

Our BMS and RMS children gain an academic foundation and much more. Our classroom community involves a moral and social dimension that grows respectful and empowered children as individuals. We are so very proud of our chil-

dren's work and also proud of the support from our families and teachers in helping our children to realize their full potential. The children's discoveries in our classrooms will serve them for a lifetime. **[Editor - Laurie March]**