

# BRASON ACADEMY

Brason Academy Montessori School (BAMS) strives to provide a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment for every child in our care. We believe that every child deserves to be respected, seen, and celebrated for the beautiful individuals that they are. At BAMS we prioritize the child and we seek the assistance of the families and the community to help us to foster and develop each child's independence, curiosity, and love of learning.



The program that BAMS provides has been developed with careful consideration and adherence to:



### **The Montessori Method**

This method is a child-centered educational approach, based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. We recognize that every child is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive and thoughtfully prepared learning environment. The Montessori approach values the human spirit and the development of the child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well being. The hallmarks of Montessori education are multi age groupings that foster peer learning, uninterrupted blocks of work time, and guided choice of work activity. In addition, a full complement of specially designed Montessori learning materials is meticulously arranged and available for use in an aesthetically pleasing environment



### **Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)**

The guiding body that holds all care centres accountable to the families that we serve.



### **“How Does Learning Happen?: Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years ”**

A research document that outlines the key strategies, theories, and practices that will best benefit the development of the whole child. This document guides our daily practices and how we engage with the children and their families.



# Our View of Children

*“Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibility of the future” - Dr. Maria Montessori*



At Brason Academy Montessori School we believe, as Dr. Montessori did, that all children are capable, competent, curious and rich in potential. By providing the children with a fun and stimulating prepared environment we are able to allow them to freely engage their inner drives to explore, investigate and create. The Montessori classroom is a safe place where everyone is welcome and treated with equal respect. It is also a place that allows for reasonable risk, as well as responsibility, which helps to foster independence and a positive learning experience. We know that children are competent and able to question, examine and investigate a wide variety of topics and areas of interest.



# Program Goals – Our Promise to the Children

The staff at BAMS are constantly striving to create and deliver a program that is fun and engaging for all the children who attend. We do this by carefully considering each child as an individual and determining what each individual needs in order to be a happy, self-regulated, and productive member of society. It is always our most immediate goal to look after the safety and well being of all of the children in our care. We promise to care for each child by taking care of their physical, mental, social, emotional, and educational well being.



## Safety

- Safe and secure learning and play areas that are monitored and inspected daily.
- Children are supervised at all times and are always in an approved student: teacher ratio groupings
- Staff keep up to date records of who is in attendance, including exact times of drop off and pick up,
- Utilize frequent head counts to ensure that all children are accounted for.
- In the case of any accidents or incidents, all staff are trained in first aid and CPR-C. This prepares them to respond quickly and effectively in emergency situations and allows them to easily assess and manage all manner of injuries, illnesses, or medication administration.
- Above all, in every situation, we will always treat the child first by offering comfort and reassurance during times of distress.
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## Health

- Children are taught, through daily activities, proper personal hygiene.
- Teachers record and monitor any noticeable change in the child's health in the morning when they are dropped off and follow up with the parents regarding their observations.
- We follow the public health guidelines for prevention and spread of illness and sanitization. Visual aids and directions for hand hygiene are posted throughout the school to guide our staff and students.
- Children's allergies and anaphylactic plans are posted in relevant areas and reviewed annually by each staff member.
- If an infectious illness is confirmed within the center, we will inform families and provide facts about that illness as well as post the information at each entrance.



## Nutrition

- Our menus are carefully crafted by our school Chef. All meals are prepared by staff who are trained and up to date in their "Safe Food Handling" certification.
- Food is served in accordance with Canada's Food Guide, which gives us guidance on portion size and recommended food variety. We prepare a 4-week rotation menu that will change to suit the season.
- All menus are posted in advance and available to our families to view, both on our website and posted in our school.
- We strive to incorporate diverse foods from many cultures and we strive to include various fruits, vegetables, and superfoods.
- We respect that many people will have varying dietary needs due to allergies or personal/religious preferences. We will always ensure that every child is offered a nutritionally equal substitute in the event that a food is being served that they may not consume.
- Meals are served family style with all children eating together, creating a sense of community and belonging while making meal times a very positive experience for children. Children are encouraged to be independent while eating and to try all of the new and diverse food foods served to them.

How do we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff?

At BAMS we make it our mission to foster healthy relationships with children and their families. We always aim to always actively listen to each child and respond to them in a positive way. Staff support the child's need to self-regulate and assist them as they work to develop that skill. Communication within the classroom is adapted to be inclusive of all children who attend. There is an open line of communication with parents which allows for the families and the staff to make each other aware of anything of significance in the child's life that might impact their day to day life or their learning experience at school. Educators make an effort to get to know children and their families. We believe that every child should feel like the days that are special to them are also special to us. In addition to scheduled parent teacher interview we also provide many opportunities for families to come together with the school in celebration and learning. These events allow for positive interactions between the school and the families and provide an opportunity for parents to engage and participate in their children's school life.

*What does it look like in the classroom?*

- Children are greeted every morning with a handshake and a "good morning".
- Getting down to the child's level and offering eye contact when they are speaking.
- Verbal cues for when anticipated transitions will be happening.
- Communication support is provided for those who need it through the use of visual aids, sign language, interpreters, etc.
- Speaking in calm and quiet voices.
- Staff are available to speak to parents at pick up and drop off
- Parents can get in touch with teaching staff at any time during the day via email.
- We ask that our families share with us all of the celebrations and observances that they honour in their household so that we can share them with the whole school.
- "Watch me work" sessions.
- Information sessions.
- School picnics.

How do we encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate

*What does it look like in the classroom?*

Self-regulation is pivotal to the Montessori philosophy followed at our school. The staff will provide each individual child with controlled choices – suited to their level of interest, development, and ability. This process allows for the child to experience independence, self-reliance, and pride, which in turn helps to strengthen their ability to self regulate. Staff focus on positive reinforcement when they are interacting with the children, with an aim to keep open lines of communication between the child and the adult. We acknowledge that not every child communicates in the same way and we will develop strategies and methods to help communicate with any child who may be experiencing a barrier. Such barriers may include things like a speech delay, learning a new language, or some form of neurodivergence. All children are treated with respect and dignity and given the opportunity to grow and learn in a safe and welcoming environment. Through the use of “Grace and Courtesy”, a teaching element in all Montessori classrooms, staff model appropriate behaviours and communications and gently encourage the children to do the same. Montessori classes utilize mixed age groupings to help enhance the learning experience of the children. This method allows for children to remain in the same room, with children whom they are already familiar with, for a full 2-3 year cycle. This creates natural and organic opportunities for the children to interact with peers of different age groups. Our teachers model respectful ways of communicating and demonstrate problem solving for the children. As often as possible the teachers suggest that a child seeking help ask other children before asking an adult. Children gain confidence in various situations, observe how others solve problems, and learn how to help one another. They gain experience and naturally begin to learn how to self-regulate.

- **Shelves are filled with a wide variety of activities that suite different interests and abilities.**
- **Children's work is displayed proudly in the classrooms and hallways.**
- **Children move freely through the classroom and engage with the peers in their chosen work space.**
- **Children respect each others work spaces and do not disrupt another child who is actively engaged.**
- **Toddler room has children ages 15 month -2.5 years old**
- **Casa classrooms have children of mixed ages**
- **Children of various ages often choose to work in pairs or small groups and so peer teaching happens.**
- **The older children become role models and leaders for the group; they see themselves as helpers and take on the responsibility of caring for the younger children.**

## How do we foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry?

Our classrooms are divided into 5 areas of essential learning, namely Practical life, Sensorial, Math, Language and Culture. All these areas have a mixture of two types of materials. One being pre prepared learning apparatus which are designed based on years of research and observations of how a child's brain functions. The other being free form and adaptable activities that are changed out based on the interests and needs of the individual children within the particular cohort. These materials are often self-correcting and help the child explore many different concepts. The concepts are often taken from concrete to abstract and help to satisfy the child's need to explore, inquire, and make conclusions. Most of the equipment is made with real natural wood to make the environment more authentic. Our outdoor play curriculum also revolves around themes of nature like investigating and exploring flora and fauna, raking up the leaves or gardening. Science exploration includes learning about plants and animals, chemical and physical experiments. Geography is taught through sensorial experiences and history through the passage of time. Exploration of art materials and learning techniques with crayons, coloured pencils, markers, paint, glue, art papers, play dough, clay, scissors etc are always a part of the art shelf. There are ample opportunities to look at books, listen to stories, role-play, and sing songs. Our daily schedule is flexible with much time devoted to child-initiated work time. We take care to ensure that all of the books, activities, and learning opportunities reflect the diverse community of children within the classroom.

## *What does it look like in the classroom?*

- **Activities available on the shelves are rotated on a regular basis.**
- **Children are observed and their interests are documented. ie: a student is observed to be fascinated with the solar system, staff will then begin incorporating activities about the solar system.**
- **Hand on materials that allow the children to learn through their senses.**
- **Children are invited to bring in items that spark joy and interest and share it with the classroom.**
- **Gardens are planted in the spring and the fruits and vegetables grown are used in food preparation activities in the classroom.**
- **Blocks of outdoor play time are allotted with "no toys" in order to encourage the children to use nature as their playground and to inspire their imagination.**

## How do we provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences?

At BAMS we follow an inquiry-based learning approach where children initiate their learning based on their own individual areas of interest. We believe that children have sensitive periods of learning when the individual is particularly driven towards developing a specific skill. The children can decide about activities they wish to do, interact with each material until they choose to put it away, and return the material to the shelf for others to use. They can choose to work alone or with a friend. They may decide to sit at a table or work on a rug on the floor. The materials can be adapted so that they suit all learning styles and abilities. Activities that are available are carefully developed and curated to reflect the diverse community of children within the classroom and in our community. The adults in a Montessori environment are observers who act as a link between the children and their environment. Teachers support this learning process through scaffolding of knowledge and providing assistance only when needed. Each academic year we plan multiple field trips which allow the children to explore their community and to investigate a variety of different topics.

## *What does it look like in the classroom?*

- **When a child shows an interest in a particular area of learning the Teacher will fill the library and shelve with books and activities on that topic and allow the child to freely explore that which sparks joy in them.**
- **Classroom has tables of various sizes that allow the children to choose to sit in social groups, or to sit at a quiet table on their own.**
- **Children engage with the activities for as long as they need to in order to satisfy their natural curiosity.**
- **Staff frequently observe the children to understand their interests, strengths, and areas for development. They use this information to guide their planning and to create an environment that supports their interests.**

How do we plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported?

We believe that every child matters and we strive to provide a space that is accessible to all and where everyone is welcome, seen, and respected.. We view children as being competent and capable human beings who are able to be proactive participants in their own learning journey. We support the children in their endeavours to take on developmentally appropriate risks and to be responsible for their own actions with the support and guidance from the teachers. The environment is set up to meet each child's individual needs and allow them to explore, reflect, and engage in their own learning. Teachers keep detailed records of each child's learning progress, their interests, and their areas of growth and use those records to provide a unique lesson plan for every child. We respect all the cultures, languages, traditions, and family values of the children in our program. We aim to introduce the children to a variety of different cultures, languages, peoples, and places from all around the world. We allow for the children and their families to have opportunities to share with us about their culture or special days. This can allow for hands-on experiences with new types of foods, songs, clothing, etc and creates a deep sense of community amongst the entire classroom.

*What does it look like in the classroom?*

- **Everything in the classroom is child sized and accessible. This allows for these children to be independent in all of their activities.**
- **Playground equipment is free form and allows for the children to creatively build, risk assess, and climb.**
- **Teachers often spend time one on one with a child to present new material and develop new skills.**
- **Observation time allows the Teachers to assess and respond to the individual learning needs of every child.**
- **Learning tools are readily available to any student who may need them ie: noise cancelling headphones, fidgets, pencil grips, etc.**

How do we incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving child care?

*What does it look like in the classroom?*

The programming at BAMS offers children the opportunity to spend at least 2 hours in the outdoor environment, so long as the weather permits it. During outdoor play, children are encouraged to participate in activities that help develop gross motor skills and endurance. The Montessori classroom is designed to incorporate movement into many of its activities. The children are encouraged to move around the classroom as much as they can. During inclement weather, indoor gross motor activities are offered. Children who need sleep, like Toddlers and pre-school aged children, are provided a cot and a quiet place to sleep. Those that need the sleep will be allowed to sleep for up to 2 hours. Older children who no longer require day time naps are encouraged to have a quiet rest times for a minimum of 30 min. The non-sleepers are offered some quiet activities to engage them during that period. Sleep policy is always adhered to during rest times.

- **Classroom activities require children to navigate the classroom while carrying materials and circumventing other children and their work.**
- **Multi-step activities may require many trips from a work space to the sink/shelf/table etc.**
- **Outdoor environment has things like balls, balance beams, and bikes. It also has lots of space to run, use wheeled toys.**
- **Indoor playtime will incorporate things like yoga, dance, and gross motor songs.**
- **During rest times the lights in the classroom are turned down and soft music plays.**
- **Staff provide comfort and support to those trying to sleep by rubbing their backs.**
- **Children who do not sleep will engage in quiet activities like reading, printing, or puzzles.**

How do we foster open communication and ongoing engagement with parents about the program and their children?

At BAMS, we believe that parent engagement and communication is pivotal in a child's development. Parents are involved and consulted any time staff feel that a change may need to be made in the child's daily structure or routine. These changes may include things like transitioning to a new classroom, behaviour management, involvement of the resource consultant, etc. Should there be a communication barrier between the family and the school, ie language challenges, or speech impairments, the school will make any accommodations necessary to successfully communicate with the family. Staff are always available to talk to parents at pick up and drop off times and are always reachable throughout the day via email. Monthly newsletters are sent out to outline the areas of learning as well as all important school updates and announcements. Through the use of our online application, Transparent Classroom, parents are given up to date progress reports and daily photos of their child developing within the classroom. We use surveys to allow families to share their thoughts and concerns about the program and we are always available to meet in person to discuss issues.

*What does it look like in the classroom?*

- **Parent/Teacher conferences twice a year where we answer questions about child development or provide resources to parents and also communicate and share the goals for their children.**
- **Report cards are sent out to families twice a year to communicate to them the key learning skills that their child has achieved or is working towards.**
- **Curriculum workshops and Meet the Teachers evenings provide families with plenty of opportunities to get to know the teachers, the curriculum and the school environment.**
- **Events like Year end "Parents' Appreciation Picnics" and "Mother's Day Tea Party" , gives parents and families an opportunity to mingle with each other.**

How do we involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff?

*What does it look like in the classroom?*

We recognize that all children are unique individuals who have a wide variety of learning abilities. We seek assistance from outside resources agencies like KW Habilitation and KidsAbility For children who may need an individual educational plan. Our environment is equitable and inclusive and the resource consultants are invited into the classroom environment to provide our staff with tools to help ensure that we are providing every child in our care with everything that they need to have a happy and successful time in our care. Early Childhood Specialist consultants, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, and Physical Therapists are all available to meet with parents, observe and assess the child's needs in the classroom, and support teachers in providing helpful programming for the children. Teachers often invite special visitors into the program. For example: community helpers like police officers, fire fighters, dental hygienists, the humane society, librarians, etc

BAMS has a purchase of service agreement with the Region of Waterloo for child care fee subsidy. We participate in OneList, the central registry for child care. Brason Montessori accepts students pursuing their Early Childhood Diplomas for internships and placement, from Conestoga College and Mohawk College. The school also mentors Student candidates for Montessori Certification.

- **A resource consultant will visit each room at scheduled times. They may offer their observations of the classroom environment, or may just answer questions posed by the classroom staff.**
- **If a child is recommended for assistance the specialist will meet with the families as well as the School to discuss a plan of action.**
- **Specialists will meet with the child in the classroom environment and provide the School with tools and strategies to best aid in the child's development.**
- **If required and eligible, a child may be granted a 1:1 educational assistant who will help them with their specific needs.**

## How do we support staff in relation to continuous professional learning?

The field of child education is constantly growing and adapting and we recognize that it is vital for teaching staff to continue their own growth and learning in order to best serve the children and their families. BAMS encourages all of our staff to further develop their practices by going to training sessions, conferences, and seminars where they could keep abreast of the best practices in their field. The school plans for 3-4 PD days a year in order to allow for staff to engage in such opportunities. Information about changes or updates in the field of early years are disseminated and discussed on a regular basis. Every employee is provided funds for their professional development. BAMS fully reimburses the registration for ECE College fees. Staff engage in monthly staff meetings where they discuss their development with each other and guide and support one another through their journey. We often sponsor teacher candidates to pursue Early Childhood Education and/or Montessori diplomas from MACTE approved Montessori Teacher Training Institutes. The school participates in "Early Years Engage" which is a quality initiative by the Region of Waterloo Children Services.

## *What does it look like in the classroom?*

- **Newly acquired teaching techniques are immediately put into practice in the classrooms. This can look like new routines, more focus on group times, new language lessons, etc.**
- **New materials and activities are added regularly to reflect new learning on how to best engage the children in our care.**
- **Staff will spend time in other classrooms to observe the each other and learn new practices and skills.**
- **Supervisors will spend time in the classrooms to provide guidance and mentorship to the staff.**
- **Staff are given ample prep time throughout the week in order to ensure they are using their skills and knowledge base to provide an optimal classroom environment.**

## How do we document and review the above mentioned strategies and their impact on the children and their families?

Staff at BAMS participate in regular team meetings to discuss, plan and evaluate their program and interactions with children. During these meetings detailed notes are kept and stored in our Continuous Quality Improvement binder. There are parent surveys that allow parents to provide us with feedback on the impact of the strategies and approaches that we follow. Parents are kept up to date with the progress of their child and the activities that they are engaged in through various mediums. The Children's work is displayed inside on bulleting boards throughout the school. Transparent Classroom is our application that allows us to share daily progress updates with the families. The Yearbook is a compilation of all the varied activities that the children were engaged in during the year. The teachers write detailed observations of the children's progress and well-being on a regular basis. Based on these observations, they generate a report card, twice a year. Parents are offered this report card and an in-person consultation with the teacher.

## *What does it look like in the classroom?*

- **Staff regularly take photos of the children during class time to document what activities the children are engaged in as well as well as activities that the whole class participates in together.**
- **Parents are comfortable approaching staff on a daily basis to discuss their child's progress, or any concerns that they may have about the program.**
- **Administration acts as a support bridge between the families and the staff whenever there is an issue brought forth by either the staff or the families.**

## Annual Review

As per the Ministry's direction, BAMS shall ensure that all new employees, students and volunteers review this Program Statement upon hire or before their placement begins. Additionally, all employees, students and volunteers will review this Program Statement annually, and after any modification

## Contact us

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