

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

*Buena Vista Elementary is a Colorado Springs District 11 public Montessori school.
We are now going into our 14th year with the Montessori Program.*

What grade levels do you offer?

We currently offer classes for 3-year-olds through 5th grade.

Is there a cost to the program?

The program is *free for students in kindergarten through 5th grade*. There is a fee for the preschool program. Preschool families have three options for enrollment:

- ½ day is 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., Mon – Fri, @ \$325/month based on a 9-month payment plan.
- Full day is 8:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Mon – Fri, @ \$550/month based on a 9-month payment plan.
- ½ day for 3 days per week is 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., Tues, Wed, and Thurs only, @ \$227/month based on a 9-month payment plan (this option is limited to four 3-year-old spots).

How do I enroll my child at Buena Vista?

We are a school with no neighborhood boundaries; all families go through a Choice Application process to attend Buena Vista. The application process begins during the district's Choice Open Enrollment window (November 1 – February 15) the year *before* your child would begin school. The application can be found on the District 11 website at www.d11.org. Scroll down and click on the CHOICE icon on the left side of your screen, and you'll be brought directly to the application.

Once you bring in your Choice Open Enrollment Application to Buena Vista, you will be on a wait list until February when we begin to process applications. Although the choice window technically closes on February 15, we at Buena Vista continue to accept families onto our wait lists throughout the school year. Applications become inactive at the end of the current school year.

What is the student-teacher ratio?

Each of our Primary classrooms has 20 students consisting of 10 preschoolers and 10 kindergarteners. Lower Elementary (grades 1st, 2nd, and 3rd) and Upper Elementary (grades 4th and 5th) classrooms are designed to be large enough to foster independence but small enough to allow for appropriate guidance and supervision—2 adults for 22 to 28 children.

Why do Montessori classes have mixed ages?

Mixed-age groups naturally reflect family, neighborhood, and workplace environments. In a mixed-age classroom, younger children have the opportunity to learn from older classmates and older children gain confidence from sharing their experiences. This interaction fosters self-directed learning and creates a stimulating classroom atmosphere.

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How do teachers know if students are learning what they need to know?

The staff at Buena Vista undertook a comprehensive process to align the Montessori lessons with the Colorado Academic Standards and we give benchmark tests every quarter to ensure that all students are progressing.

Individualized work plans guide daily work and include lessons the teacher will give, lessons for the student to practice, and areas of free choice based on individual interest. Teachers conference with students about their work on a regular basis and adjust their learning path based upon their mastery of particular areas of study.

How do you support gifted students at the school?

Montessori schools are ideal for gifted children since they can extend their learning and pursue their interests throughout the school day. We also have a teacher who works specifically with gifted children on a part-time basis to ensure that they have opportunities to engage further in creative work, critical thinking, and problem solving.

How do I know if Montessori is a good fit for my child?

Montessori works best when children begin at a young age and continue through the elementary years. Once a child has attended a traditional school, the transition into a Montessori school can be difficult. Children who are able to concentrate and work independently thrive in the Montessori environment whereas students who need more direction often do better in environments that offer more structure.

How do students transition to traditional middle school at the end of the program?

Both of our Upper Elementary teachers have previous experience as middle school teachers and know what is required for success at the next level. One class adheres more closely to Montessori practices and the other offers a hybrid experience in which Montessori and traditional practices combine to help children ease into traditional middle schools. In general, Montessori students thrive in middle school because they have a strong academic foundation, well-developed social skills, and they know how to manage their time as independent, self-directed learners.