



MOUNTAINSIDE
MONTESSORI

Mountainside Montessori

GROWING TOGETHER

Mountainside's Next Head of School





A Legacy of Learning, Leadership & Love

Dear Future Head of Mountainside,

When I began Mountainside over two decades ago, it wasn't with a grand plan—it was with a simple dream. I wanted a true Montessori environment for my two young daughters; and when I couldn't find it, I rolled up my sleeves and created one in my living room. For two decades, this tiny seed of an idea has been watered by courage, community, and a great deal of faith; and has grown into the thriving, farm-based Montessori school we know today.

This school has been built, quite literally, by hand and heart—by families who believed in a vision, by teachers who saw the profound potential in each child, and by a community that has always been willing to do what it takes to nurture something extraordinary. Together, we have created more than a school; we have created a living, breathing example of what Montessori education can be when it is deeply rooted in nature, authenticity, and love.

As I prepare to pass the torch, I do so with immense gratitude and confidence. Mountainside stands on solid ground—its mission unwavering, its staff exceptional, and its community as vibrant as ever. The next Head of School will not need to reinvent; rather, they will be invited to build upon a foundation that has soul.

To the person considering this role: know that you are stepping into a place with a heartbeat. You will find a community ready to walk beside you, not behind you. You will find children who remind you daily why Montessori's century-old principles still feel revolutionary. And you will find a team whose dedication and warmth will both humble and inspire you.

There will be moments that challenge you, as there were for me—but also moments that take your breath away: the laughter on the playground, the quiet concentration of a child discovering something for the first time, the rhythm of life on the farm that grounds us all.

Mountainside is ready for its next chapter.
It's ready for you.

With warmth and gratitude,

Edel Kunkel
Founding Head of School
Mountainside Montessori

School Overview

*Let the children be free; encourage them;
let them run outside when it is raining;
let them remove their shoes when they find a puddle of water;
and when the grass of the meadows is wet with dew,
let them run on it and trample it with their bare feet;
let them rest peacefully when a tree invites them to sleep beneath its shade;
let them shout and laugh when the sun wakes them in the morning.*

— Maria Montessori



Our Mission and Vision

Mountainside Montessori 501(c)(3) provides the highest quality Montessori education to children from birth through the Ninth Grade. We give children the time, the Guides and the environment to develop their joy of learning and self-confidence.

Sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, entrepreneurship, and free play in nature are central to our mission and factor heavily into our innovative farm-based curriculum.

In 2003, Edel Kunkel began a Montessori home-school for her two young daughters. By Fall 2004, the word was out and the community was asking to be included. Mrs. Kunkel's first class commenced learning in the newly finished basement of her home and quickly grew to its 20-student capacity. Mountainside Montessori has grown steadily since.

Over the past 23 years Mountainside Montessori has grown from serving just four students to a thriving community of 137 students, ranging in age from 18 months to 15 years, and a dedicated staff of 26 employees.

Much evolved from its humble roots, Mountainside now comprises seven environments: Toddler, three Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Adolescent. Our robust education programs are complimented by ten beautiful acres of outdoor expanse, and a fully functioning farm where children learn, explore, and experience the real applications of their work.

At Mountainside, our curriculum fosters the development of the whole child within an environment that encourages community, cooperation and respect. In keeping with Montessori philosophy, grace and courtesy are integral in our programs. In tandem with age-appropriate academics and complimentary electives, Mountainside children practice lessons to cultivate empathy, kindness and conflict resolution.

Consistently recognized by AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) for maintaining high standards and the level of excellence that Maria Montessori envisioned, Mountainside Montessori is the Northern Piedmont's preeminent provider of Montessori education.



Our Classrooms

Our thoughtfully designed learning spaces embody Maria Montessori’s concept of the “Prepared Environment,” where beauty, simplicity, and order invite children to explore with independence and purpose. Well-chosen materials and intentional activities support each child as they follow their curiosity, develop self-discipline, and learn to manage their time within a flexible daily routine.

This prepared environment extends seamlessly outdoors into our gardens, an essential part of our classrooms. Children choose meaningful outdoor work—watering, weeding, harvesting, sweeping, raking, arranging cut flowers, composting, or even feeding the pigs. Produce and herbs from the garden become ingredients for baking or items for fundraising, such as the students’ dried rosemary sold at the Holiday Market. In these spaces, indoors and out, students discover that real work is joyful, purposeful, and deeply connected to the world around them.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed so that each child is allowed to progress at a rate that encourages mastery of skills, while allowing for exploration of a child’s special interests. Our programs allow students of different abilities, ages, and interests to learn from one another and collaborate in creating a classroom community that is courteous, respectful, and peaceful for all. Students assume leadership in their learning by selecting their activities, attending lessons, working with others, and maintaining a close relationship with the Guide, who motivates, inspires, and helps direct learning.

Our Core Values



Sustainable Agriculture

At Mountainside Montessori, our working farm is a living laboratory where students of all ages navigate the living world. Our children apply tangible skills they learn in each environment as they care for animals, tend the land, and dig deeper into concepts like soil health. Field trip experiences deepen their understanding of ecological systems and responsible food production.

Environmental Stewardship

Mountainside Montessori nurtures a profound respect for the Earth, emphasizing our shared responsibility to act in partnership with the environment. Children learn daily practices that foster conservation, regeneration, and mindful interaction with the natural world.



Entrepreneurship

From our Adolescent Program's sale of farm-raised meat and eggs, to the younger children's charitable bake sales, Mountainside students gain real-world practice in math, planning, and economic strategy. Preparing hand-made gifts and baked goods for our annual Holiday Market deepens students' sense of initiative, nurtures their craftsmanship, and connects them more fully to their community.

Free Play in Nature

Unstructured outdoor exploration is central to the school's philosophy. Children play outside in all weather, supported by thoughtfully designed gardens, outdoor classrooms, a Discovery Trail, and a beloved bug hotel—spaces that invite curiosity, movement, and connection with the natural world.





Machu Pichu, Peru - 2022



Visiting coffee bean farm, Guatemala - 2025



Helping in an orphanage, South Africa - 2024



Helping at a daycare center, Ecuador - 2019

International Experiences

A key component of the Mountainside Montessori Adolescent Program is an international trip for our ninth-grade students. This beloved rite of passage represents a culmination of their growth over their years at Mountainside and aligns beautifully with the aims of the Third Plane of Development. Students travel to a country that “will not be the same in our lifetime” to gain firsthand insight into the daily realities and diverse ways of life experienced by much of the world. A thoughtfully chosen service project within our host community allows ninth graders to connect deeply with local partners and contribute to humankind in meaningful and compassionate ways.

Over the years, we have:

- visited Ecuador to paint and make repairs for an impoverished preschool
- worked in an orphanage in South Africa, where students planted a garden, painted, and supported local children with schoolwork
- painted animal enclosures and public spaces at a wildlife refuge and rehabilitation center in Costa Rica
- supported an impoverished family in Peru, repairing their home and providing supplies to help their daughter attend school
- collaborated with a small, Montessori-inspired school in Guatemala to paint outdoor equipment and provide gardening tools

True to the Montessori approach, each year’s international experience is shaped by the ninth graders who plan and prepare for it. Decisions, purchases, and daily logistics offer powerful lessons in navigating real-world challenges—such as managing travel logistics, assessing safety in unfamiliar settings, honoring different cultures and customs, and engaging with the world with curiosity, humility, and wonder. In addition to completing a meaningful service project, students select cultural experiences to enrich their travel and take responsibility for the planning required to make these experiences possible. Staying in Airbnbs provides access to a kitchen, enabling students to plan, shop for, and prepare their own meals.

By ninth grade, students have spent three years contributing to the adolescent micro-economy, giving them the skills and confidence to create a budget and fund the trip themselves, with the exception of their flights.

A memorable hallmark of the Ninth Grade Trip is a challenging hike within the host country—a physical and symbolic milestone representing each student’s independence, resilience, and growth. Past journeys have included summiting Cotopaxi in Ecuador and hiking Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa—truly “bucket list” climbs for many travelers.

Our alumni consistently describe this international experience as “life-changing,” expanding their worldview and strengthening their ability to engage with, navigate, and contribute meaningfully to the global community as they step into their purpose.



Our History



2003

The Founding Edel Kunkel creates an authentic Montessori class in the living room of her home for her daughters and two other students (aged 3-6 years). Mountainside Montessori, Inc., is born.

2004

Rapid Growth Mountainside's first class moves into newly finished basement space and quickly reaches its 20-student capacity.



2007

Toddler Program Begins Edel and her family move out of the building and convert the entire house to school use. With the expanded space, the school opens an Assistants to Infancy (Toddler) Program; and Mountainside Mornings, a free weekly drop-in program for parents and children from birth to age three. Both programs are enthusiastically welcomed by the community and once again, capacity is quickly reached.

2009

Decision Point Mountainside Montessori comes to a crossroads: If the school wishes to accept elementary students, it cannot remain at its current location. It must move to a location within the service districts established by Fauquier County.

2010

A New Home on the Horizon Mountainside establishes its 501(c)(3), and secures 10 acres on Belvoir Road in Marshall for its future home.



2011

The Elementary Classroom Opens Thanks to a donation from a generous grantor, our Elementary Program opens in October with seven children at our original location.

2013

Addition of Adolescent Program As our students continue to age, parents ask Miss Edel to create an Adolescent Program to allow their children to continue attending Mountainside. The Adolescent program begins in January with four students off site in the basement of an attending family's home.

2014

Construction Begins Mountainside breaks ground at the Belvoir Road campus.



2015

First Day of School on Belvoir Road A new school year commences on our new campus and enrollment climbs to 67.



Our History

2018

501(c)3 Status is Complete Mountainside Montessori is now fully operational under the 501(c)3 Mountainside finally belongs to the community and can begin writing grants and fundraising for a more secure future.

2021

Mountainside Grows with its First Modular Building

Thanks to a generous grantor, Mountainside adds a Modular classroom for our Upper Elementary Program, thus providing the space to meet pandemic-related demand for increased enrollment.

2022

Mountainside Begins a new School Year Mountainside begins the school year with 115 students enrolled. A wait list is established for both Toddler (18 months - 3 years) and Primary (3 years - 6 years) communities.

2024

Our Second Modular is in Place Mountainside adds a new modular building for Lower Elementary Students. Thanks to a generous benefactor Mountainside adds a new modular building for Lower Elementary students. As a result of a successful paddle raise and the generosity of an Adolescent parent, we completed the beautification of the modular by adding gardens, shrubs, trees and boulders to the environment.

2025

Mountainside Today Mountainside currently has 130 students enrolled across seven environments: Toddler, three Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary and Adolescent.

2026

Mountainside Tomorrow As we look ahead, our community enters an exciting new chapter marked by a transition in leadership, and the continued strength of the school's dedicated families, faculty, and supporters. Guided by a robust Strategic Plan developed in partnership with the Board of Directors, Mountainside is poised for thoughtful growth, enhanced programming, and a deepened commitment to its founding Montessori principles. With a legacy built on resilience, vision, and community partnership, Mountainside looks confidently to the future—prepared, united, and inspired for what comes next.





Mountainside Parents are Saying



It's difficult to articulate the positive impact Mountainside has had on our family. Our children are learning more than we knew possible, spending hours outside each day, eating fresh foods they've grown at school, taking complete responsibility over their work, discovering new passions, and developing an understanding of how to be a contributing leader in a community.



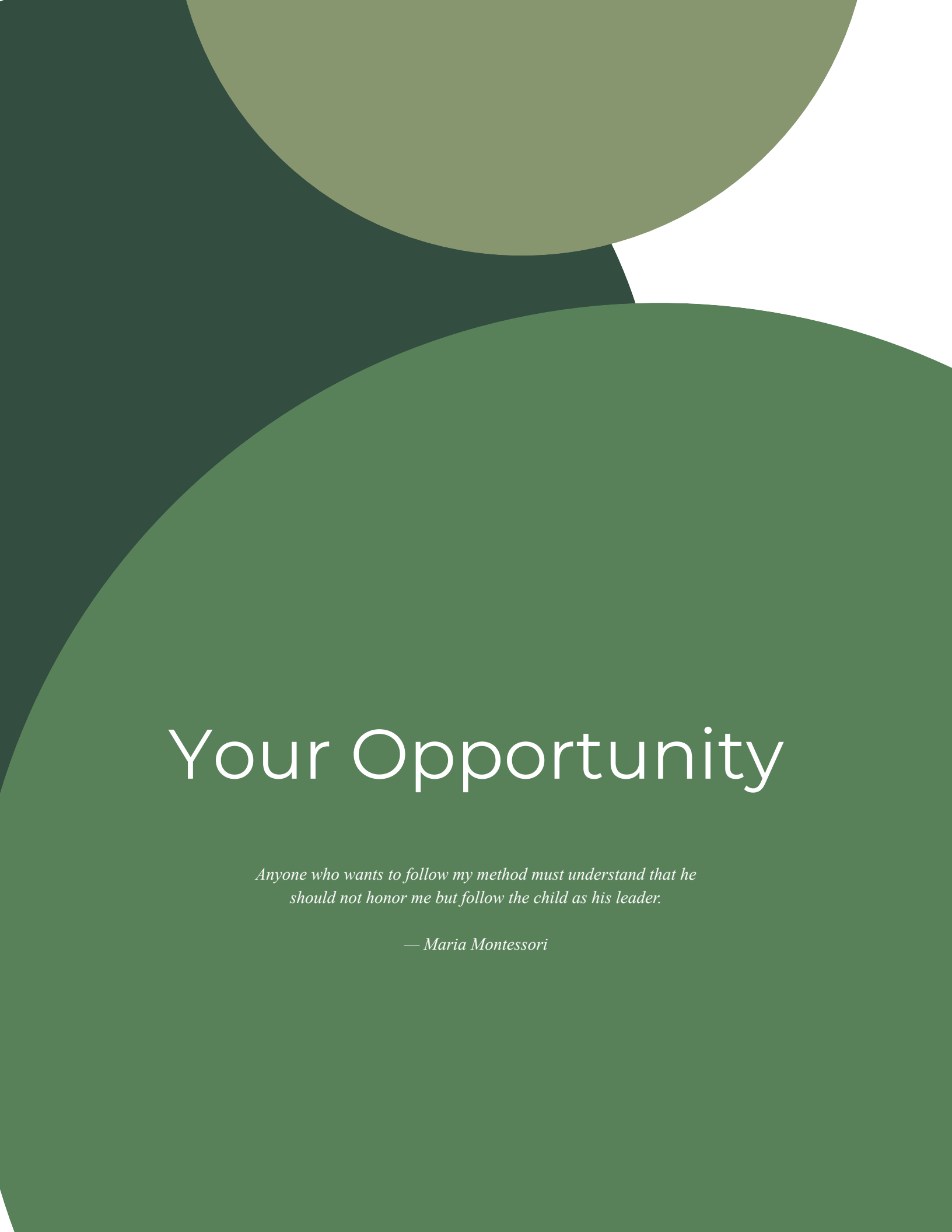
The best thing was the love. You could tell the teachers were passionate about what they did and had great affection for the children, and the children could tell, too. My children loved their teachers and loved going to school. As a mother, I could not ask for more.



Mountainside Montessori gave our children the curiosity and confidence that great leadership is built on. The caring Guides and staff taught our two girls across many dimensions, but I will always be exceptionally grateful for the many ways that Mountainside's community taught my husband and I to be better parents through tenants of the Montessori philosophy.



We knew a Montessori education would give our son the opportunity to grow to his potential. Purposeful outdoor work on the farm allowed him to exercise both his mind and body daily. It provided experiences of collaboration with his fellow students, and supported practical study. The values of stewardship, cooperation, and meaningful work continue to remain important to him today as he pursues his engineering studies.



Your Opportunity

*Anyone who wants to follow my method must understand that he
should not honor me but follow the child as his leader.*

— Maria Montessori



Position Overview

The Head of School (HOS) at Mountainside Montessori serves as the school's educational leader, operational oversight, and community representative. This role ensures the sustained excellence of our Montessori programs—from Toddler through Adolescent—while also guiding the strategic, financial, and cultural health of the school.

The HOS is responsible for:

- Upholding and advancing authentic AMI Montessori pedagogy for all program levels.
- Overseeing day-to-day operations, including staffing, finance, admissions, regulatory compliance, and campus stewardship.
- Leading a collaborative culture among Guides, staff, parents, and the Board of Directors.
- Strengthening Mountainside's identity as a nature-rich, community-rooted learning environment.
- Communicating the school's mission clearly to internal and external audiences.
- Ensuring long-term sustainability through strategic planning, program development, and community engagement.
- Guiding the school community through its future phases of expansion, including capital campaigns.

Required Qualifications

- **Montessori Background:** Montessori credential (AMI, AMS, or MACTE-accredited); strong understanding of Montessori philosophy required.
- **Educational Leadership Experience:** Minimum of 3-5 years classroom experience required. Montessori administrative experience preferred.
- **Academic Credentials:** Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree in education, leadership, or a related field preferred.
- **Operational & Business Competence:** Experience with budgeting, personnel management, regulatory compliance, admissions, and organizational systems.
- **Communication & Relationship Skills:** Demonstrated ability to communicate clearly, build trust, and collaborate with staff, students, families, and Board members; facilitating constructive conflict resolution when needed.
- **Strategic & Organizational Leadership:** Ability to manage growth, guide change, and steward both short-term operations and long-term vision.



Core Values for Success in this Role

The strongest candidates will embody the values that make Mountainside unique:

- **Nature-Centered Philosophy:** A deep belief that children thrive when they spend time outdoors, engage with the natural world, and learn through hands-on exploration in our farm and garden environments. Cultivating our community to inspire and continue their work to impact the world at large from their experience at Mountainside.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Leads with clarity and strength, continuing to foster respectful partnership among Guides, staff, families, and the Board.
- **Community Stewardship:** Serves as the visible, welcoming face of the school—building relationships with local families, organizations, and supporters.
- **Montessori Integrity:** Models Montessori principles through communication, decision-making, and daily interactions with children and adults.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Approachable, observant, transparent, and able to navigate challenges with empathy and confidence.
- **Commitment to Growth:** Open to learning, reflective practice, and continual improvement—for the school and themselves.



Our Commitment to You

A Strong, Invested Community

A dedicated parent body that embraces grace and courtesy, vibrant local partnerships, and a community that believes deeply in the school's mission and long-term success.

Board Partnership and Support

A Board of Directors committed to collaboration, sharing talents, and strategic planning to support the long-term sustainability of the school.

Opportunities for Fulfillment and Growth

A role that supports professional development, personal evolution, and deep satisfaction in leading a joyful, nature-rooted Montessori community.



How to Apply

Interested candidates are invited to contact our leadership team via email to arrange a preliminary phone conversation, and/or to apply directly by submitting all required application materials as email attachments to edel@mountainsidemontessori.com

Review

Our Search Committee will begin reviewing candidate applications as they are received and the position will remain open until filled. Interested candidates wishing to be considered in this pool are encouraged to submit their materials as soon as possible.

Compensation and Benefits

Mountainside Montessori offers a competitive compensation package including salary of \$89,000 commensurate with experience, 401(k) with matching contribution, opportunity to enroll in AFLAC benefits, personal and sick days, fully-funded professional development opportunities, personalized leadership coaching, and tuition discount.

Application Checklist



01 *Cover Letter*

Cover letter addressed to the Mountainside Search Committee, expressing interest in and qualifications for the position.



02 *Current Resume or Curriculum Vitae*

Describing your background and experience



03 *Personal Statement*

Detailing your educational philosophy



04 *Five References*

A list of five references (including email addresses and telephone numbers) who can be contacted confidentially at the early stage of discovery; and three letters of reference



Contact

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