Painted Desert Montessori Academy

9. Educational Plan

Mission Statement: We believe education should address not only the academic needs of the children, but also speak to their spirits. Our mission is to provide individualized instruction that fosters a love of learning and respect for all living things. With the Montessori philosophy at the core, children will be guided through hands on learning in a prepared environment.

9-1

Our school follows the Montessori philosophy. Through individualized instruction using specially designed materials, students are able to use all of their senses when learning. Students enjoy being at school and learning. This leads to better attendance and higher test scores.
This model has been proven to work all over the world. Patagonia Montessori School students show academic excellence with the state test scores. In addition, students are high functioning young people contributing to the community.

9-2

The curriculum focuses on using the Montessori materials and philosophy to teach the state standards. Each student is taught at his or her own personal level of knowledge. If a student is excelling, we encourage them to learn past the state expectations. If a student is behind, we work with them to catch them up to the academic standards set forth for their grade. Students are taught until concepts are mastered.

Montessori makes learning fun by engaging the students through the use of all of their senses. By identifying a student's learning style, we can teach according to how each student learns, making learning easier and more enjoyable. By providing meaningful education, the students develop a deeper understanding of the world.

Each day, there is a three hour work period. During this time, students are given instruction and work independently and in groups. This uninterrupted work time helps the students develop greater concentration and cultivate a strong work ethic.

We implement mixed grade classrooms, with primary (3-6 year olds), lower elementary (6-9 year olds), senior elementary (9-12 year olds), and middle school (12-15 year olds). One important difference of the Montessori method is that peer teaching is utilized; students teach mastered concepts to younger students. The true test of mastery is being able to teach the idea to someone else.

9-3
The Montessori method works with most children. Children are innately curious and inquisitive. By giving them an environment specifically designed for academic and personal success, the students flourish and learn. This is true for students in Patagonia as well as Buckeye.
9-4 Painted Desert Montessori academy will follow the state standards set forth by Arizona. Students will be given lessons with the expectation of mastery. Lessons will be retaught using different strategies until the student displays a high level of proficiency. Teacher assessments will determine if a student has successfully mastered all of the state standards and is ready to graduate to the next academic level.

Additional Information Requested
Program of Instruction Narrative

9-1. Provide a description of the charter holder's philosophical approach to improving pupil achievement. Include how this philosophy has impacted the success of the existing school. If a different population will be served in the new school, how does this philosophical approach apply?

- Provide a detailed description and supporting information of Patagonia Montessori Elementary School's philosophical approach to pupil achievement.

Patagonia Montessori Elementary School utilizes a traditional Montessori philosophy. Our approach to pupil achievement is addressed with informal testing as well as state standardized test results. When a student first enters our school, the teacher uses past testing results as well as informal assessments to develop a baseline of the student's knowledge. If the student is behind in a subject, the teacher will give extra lessons and work to help the student obtain proficiency.

Informal testing happens every day in the Montessori classroom. The teacher gives a lesson on a particular concept. The student then practices the skill using manipulatives until they are confident to complete it abstractly. Once the concept is mastered, they move on to the next concept. Concurrently, this happens in all academic areas of the classroom.

The Montessori Method asserts that students have mastered a topic when they can teach it to someone else. We utilize this approach as a way of proving mastery. Since our students are placed in multiage classrooms, there are many teaching opportunities. Once a child has mastered a skill, they give the lesson to another student. The teacher observes to ensure the student understands all aspects of the concept.

Because we teach each student individually, we are afforded the opportunity to assess mastery through observation, individualized instruction, peer teaching and learning, and student/teacher discussions.

- Provide a detailed description how the Montessori Method improves pupil achievement at Patagonia Montessori Elementary School.

The Montessori Method provides each student with an individualized education based on prior knowledge and learning style. If a student is not academically proficient in a subject area, we strive to help them by providing additional instruction until standards are met. This allows the student to catch up in an environment free of stress or judgement. If a student is advanced, they are able to continue learning at the advanced level, mastering more concepts than that offered to them in a traditional classroom.

By placing students in multiage classrooms, younger students are motivated by seeing the work older students are doing; older students get to show mastery by giving lessons to younger students.

Because the students are provided concrete examples and manipulatives that explain concepts in a visual way, the level of understanding a student has is greater than that of just being told what to do.

Our prepared environment and specially trained teacher go hand in hand in helping each student succeed academically.

9-3. Present an explanation of how the implementation of the existing program of instruction meets the needs of the proposed target population.

- Provide specific information and details on how the needs of the Painted Desert Montessori Academy's population will be met.

Teachers will assess each student's strengths and weaknesses and create a plan designed to help them achieve academic success. By using the Montessori philosophy and methodology, the students who are struggling will be brought up to grade level, the average students will be encouraged to strengthen their skills, and the advanced students will be challenged beyond that of a traditional classroom setting.

9-4. Describe the level of proficiency that students must obtain to demonstrate mastery of academic core content and clear criteria for promotion from one level to the next.

- Provide specific criteria or data driven levels/goals for students to obtain in academic core content and promotion.

After reviewing the student's files and past test scores, the teacher will perform a series of informal assessments. The student and teacher then set academic goals based on meeting the state standards. These goals will be revisited and revised as the student progresses throughout the year. If a student is advancing at an acceptable rate and completing all of the assignments satisfactorily, the student will be promoted to the next grade. Students who do not display adequate knowledge of the core standards or fail to complete classroom work will be retained in their grade.