



Bluffview Montessori

Charter School Annual Report 4001-07 & World's Best Workforce Report



Submitted to:

**Volunteers of America MN
Charter School Authorizing Program
9220 Bass Lake Rd, Ste. 255
New Hope, MN 55428**

**Publicly Available on the Bluffview website
www.bluffviewmontessori.org**

November 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Vision.....	1
Mission.....	1
Statutory Compliance Verification Table	2
School Governance	3
Members of the Board of Directors	3
Stakeholder Satisfaction.....	4
Parent Survey	4
Staff Survey	4
School Management & Administration	5
Head of School.....	5
Faculty Information SY 2022-2023	6
Administration and Support Staff.....	6
Teachers	8
School Admissions and Enrollment	10
Policy 501	11
Application.....	15
Student Background and Demographics.....	16
Student Enrollment and Attrition	16
Other Student Demographics	16
Student Participation.....	17
Attendance	17
Educational Approach and Curriculum	18
Equitable Access to Excellent Teachers	23
School goals and Benchmarks for Instruction and Student Achievement: Primary Purpose M.S. 124E.01, Additional Purpose M.S.120B.11	24
Reading Achievement Gap Reduction Goals	27
Reading Achievement Gap Reduction Data 2022 vs 2023	27
Math Achievement Gap Reduction Goals	28
Math Achievement Gap Reduction Data 2022 vs 2023	28

Achievement Gap Narrative	29
Innovative Practices	30
Character-based Learning	30
Focus on Peace.....	30
Multi-age Learning Environments	31
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)	31
Immersion.....	31
Micro-economy.....	32
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).....	32
Restorative Practices/Non-Exclusionary Discipline	32
Educational Partnerships.....	33
Mental Health.....	33
Assessment Plan.....	34
Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments	35
MCA Comparison Chart	35
Summary Proficiency MCA III Math 2023 All Grades	36
Summary Proficiency MCA III Reading 2023 All Grades	37
Summary Proficiency MCA III Science 2023 All Grades	38
Program Challenges	39
Maintaining an Authentic Montessori School	39
Future Plans	40
Finances and Budget	41
Long Range Budget	41
Authorizer and Service Learning: Statutory Purpose II M.S. 124E.01	42
School Report Card	46
Non-Profit Status	47

Introduction

Bluffview Montessori School (BMS) was created on September 29, 1989 by the merger of two separate schools: Bluffview School, a Montessori Learning Center and Montessori of Winona. The school converted to a public school following the Omnibus Education Act of 1991, which allowed for the conversion of private schools to public institutions. Under its Articles of Incorporation, the school was organized exclusively for nonprofit purposes and to “create a quality Montessori school for children.” The school pursues this through a distinctive Montessori approach that embodies individualized instruction, mixed age groupings, an international curriculum, a prepared environment, and Montessori teaching materials. The goals of the school are to improve pupil learning, increase learning opportunities for pupils, encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, and create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

This report is prepared annually by BMS and is approved by its Board of Directors.

Vision

Empowered learners unfolding their full potential as whole and unique persons in a global community.

Mission

Bluffview Montessori School empowers self-directed learning through a materials-based Montessori curriculum that encourages independence and natural curiosity. Bluffview cultivates learners’ deep respect for self, community, and a peaceful environment, while nourishing the intrinsic desire for academic, civic, and personal fulfillment.

The Montessori Method of education is based on the principle that education is to be an aide to life, and that it should go far beyond the simple acquisition of factual knowledge in various areas. Montessori schools help children develop a positive attitude and a curiosity toward learning.

The following are the basic tenets of the Bluffview Montessori School program:

- Individualized instruction and a respect for each child’s interests and style of learning
- Extensive use of Montessori materials designed to help develop concentration, coordination, and independence, as well as to give concrete experiences of academic concepts
- A classroom community founded on respect for self, others, and the environment allowing for the development of social senses and awareness of others in a natural and unhurried way
- Opportunities to ask questions, to seek many answers, and to work on projects of special interest
- Class groupings where children of different ages work together. Older children inspire younger children, and by helping them, gain confidence and a sense of responsibility
- An orderly and peaceful educational environment in which the child develops enthusiasm, self-motivation, concentration and the joy of learning

Statutory Compliance Verification Table

Statutory or Contract Required Annual Report Element	Page(s)
Introduction	<u>1</u>
School Admissions and Enrollment	<u>10</u>
Student Attrition Rates	<u>16</u>
Board Governance: Elections, Roster, Training	<u>3</u>
School Management & Administration	<u>5</u>
Employment: Administration and Staffing	<u>6</u>
Academic Performance-MCA	<u>35</u>
School Annual Plans for Assessments	<u>34</u>
Charter Contract Defined Academic Performance Standards/Goals and Performance Outcomes (Addendum B in Contract)	<u>24</u>
School Finances	<u>41</u>
Service-Learning Plan and Outcomes	<u>42</u>
Innovative Practices and Implementation	<u>30</u>
Future Plans	<u>40</u>
Non-profit status	<u>47</u>

School Governance

Members of the Board of Directors

Pursuant to the Bylaws of the School and Minnesota Statutes, Section 124E.07, the Board of Directors consists of a majority of full or part-time certified teachers employed by the school and at least one Winona community member. The remaining two positions are filled by parents/guardians of enrolled Bluffview students.

The Bluffview Montessori School Board of Directors is a seven-member board. All Board members completed School Board Training in Governance, Financial Management and Employment Matters. All board members had satisfactory attendance at board meetings. Here are the results of the annual [School Board Self Evaluation for SY 22-23](#).

The 2022-2023 members of the Board of Directors included:

Name	Board Position	Group Affiliation	Date Elected	Email Address	Ongoing Training
Meghan Booth	Secretary	Teacher 486642	Elected 7/1/20	mbooth@bluffviewmontessori.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, Employment and Finance- MACS • Financials and Budgeting- BergenKDV • Open Meeting Law • Non-profit Law • MN Employment Law
Ann-Marie Dunbar	Chair	Parent	Elected 7/1/17 7/1/20	adunbar@bluffviewmontessori.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financials and Budgeting- BergenKDV • Open Meeting Law • Non-profit Law • MN Employment Law • Employment in Charter Schools, Governance and Finance- MACS
Crystal Hegge	Member	Parent	Elected 7/1/21	chegge@bluffviewmontessori.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, Employment and Finance- MACS • Financials and Budgeting- BergenKDV • Open Meeting Law • Non-profit Law • MN Employment Law
Shelly Merchlewitz	Treasurer	Teacher 333395	Elected 7/1/20	smerchlewitz@bluffviewmontessori.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter School Board Training • Financials and Budgeting- BergenKDV • Open Meeting Law • Non-profit Law • MN Employment Law • Employment in Charter Schools- MACS
Anna Aarre	Member	Teacher 421025	Appointed 8/18/22	aaarre@bluffviewmontessori.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financials and Budgeting- BergenKDV • Open Meeting Law • Non-profit Law • MN Employment Law • Employment in Charter Schools- MACS
Mariah White	Vice-Chair	Teacher 478840	Elected 7/1/21	mwhite@bluffviewmontessori.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, Employment and Finance-MACS • Financials and Budgeting- BergenKDV • Open Meeting Law • Non-profit Law • MN Employment Law
Marcy Faircloth	Member	Community Member	Appointed 9/15/22	mfaircloth@bluffviewmontessori.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financials and Budgeting- BergenKDV • Open Meeting Law • Non-profit Law • MN Employment Law • Employment in Charter Schools- MACS

Stakeholder Satisfaction

Parent Survey

Parents/guardians of enrolled students were asked to complete a survey in the spring of 2023.

- Bluffview received a 4.6 average out of a possible 5 points response to the question “I consider my child’s school to excellent school
- “I would recommend my child’s school to a friend” received a 4.7 average out of 5 points.
- Areas of greatest strength for Bluffview Montessori School revolved around culture/community and education. The themes included:
 - Small school culture that creates a community of strong respect, values, learning, engagement, and connection
 - Safe environment
 - Accessible staff that is courteous and helpful
 - School environment is generally welcoming, kind, respectful
 - An education that is individualized for each child
 - An education that incorporates Montessori principles
- Area of suggested improvements:
 - Discipline/bullying: too many perceived instances of “bullying” were not reported this year. Only 62% of those respondents concerned with potential bullying incidents actually reported bullying (70% satisfied with school’s response when reported) to the school. 80% of all respondents stated they ARE aware of the school bullying policy. This is an ongoing point of emphasis regarding parent, student, and staff education coupled with appropriate school responses to reported incidents.

Staff Survey

Staff employed at Bluffview during SY 22-23 were asked to complete a spring survey also.

- Strengths
 - Overall, 85% of staff agree or strongly agree that they would recommend BMS to a family member seeking a school for their children.
 - Communication to staff is effective
 - Accessibility of administration and support offered
 - Commitment to seeing the school succeed was 100% (culture)
- Weaknesses
 - Only 27.3% agree that the school does a good job of meeting staff financial needs

Full surveys can be viewed here: [Fall 2023 Staff and Family Surveys](#)

School Management & Administration

Head of School

Henry Schantzen

Head of School

July 2017-present

The following disclosure is provided as required by MN Statute 124 E.12 subdivision 2.

The board of directors and an individual who does not hold a valid administrative license and who serves in an administrative, supervisory, or instructional leadership position shall develop a professional development plan. Documentation of the implementation of the professional development plan of these persons shall be included in the school's annual report.

Professional Development Plan for Henry Schantzen, Head of School

The Bluffview Montessori School Board has approved a Professional Development Plan (PDP) for the Head of School. The Professional Development Plan (PDP) covers such areas as:

- Instruction and assessment
- Human Resources and personnel management
- Legal and compliance management
- Effective communication
- Board, authorizer, and community relationships
- Financial management

Activities approved but not limited for the Head of School during SY 23-24 include:

- Work to finalize elements of the current Strategic Plan. Plan to hold a Board retreat/new strategic plan development session(s) in the summer of 2024
- Continue the growth of the endowment fund, close out the current match grant
- Analyzing assessment data to evaluate curriculum scope and sequence and align Montessori curriculum to updated Minnesota state standards-plan to complete Science standard alignment this fall, begin the ELA standards alignment process in spring of 24'.
- Build/generate more staff accountability measures for all staff
 - Create/implement self-evaluations for all non-teacher staff
 - PD in the area of institutional accountability
 - Universal accountability plan/protocol aligned with At Will employment model for all staff-ensure equitable implementation
- Work with the MTSS team to finalize committee realignment/MTSS development including Educlimber training with the Data team.
- Work with the NED grant team to implement Restorative Practices schoolwide. This is for staff to engage students, as well as admin to work with staff conflict effectively

Head of School Evaluation: [HOS SY 22-23 Evaluation](#)

Faculty Information SY 2022-2023

Administration and Support Staff

This table contains information for all members of the school management/administrative team and also includes faculty employed by the school that did not serve as classroom teachers.

All of our Kindergarten and Elementary classrooms have a lead teacher and a full-time teaching assistant. Our special education program also employs paraprofessionals that assist students in the classroom.

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment
Berlin-Burns, Jill		Program Paraprofessional
Brandes, Jinna		IT Intern, SE Tech
Bronk, Mary		Transition Assistant
Brink, Amy		Program Paraprofessional
Cullen, Melanie		Program Paraprofessional
Gerdes, Cindy		Classroom Assistant-E2
Grove-Grzenia, Hailey		Program Paraprofessional
Hill, Esther		Program Paraprofessional
Hoyles, Theresa		Classroom Assistant-E2
Kerr, Carol	504193	Classroom Assistant-CH
Kimber, Evangeline		Program Paraprofessional
Klennert, Kaden		Classroom Assistant-E2
Knutson, Renee		Office Assistant
Lohmeyer, Sherry	514712	Assistant Head of School
McCullough, Jena		Classroom Assistant-CH
Metz, Lorrie		Classroom Assistant-E1
Meyer, Joyce		Classroom Assistant-E1
Mohammadi, Masouma		Transition Assistant, Pre-K after school care
Pasche, Amber		Librarian
Polachek, Criss		Classroom Assistant-CH
Prigge, Jen		Transition Assistant, Pre-K after school care

Richardson, Andrew		Maintenance
Rourke, Ruth		Administrative Assistant
Schantzen, Henry	385789	Head of School
Schloegel, Jie		Transition Assistant, Pre-K after school care
Smith, Cynthia		Food Service Lead
Smith, Katie		Food Service Assistant
White, Joan		Classroom Assistant-E2
Wilken, Amber		Classroom Assistant-E1
Windmiller, Laura		Program Paraprofessional
Young, Maddie		Transition Assistant, Pre-K after school care

Teachers

This table contains information for ALL teachers employed by the school.

In addition to being licensed by the State of Minnesota in their respective areas, Montessori elementary classroom educators prepare for their teaching assignments by either completing the requirements for a Montessori teaching certificate or enrolling in an approved Montessori training program. The Montessori certification process is extremely rigorous and involves 1-3 years of graduate level coursework, a practicum in the developmental area of assignment, and final written and oral examinations.

Our total faculty turnover from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024 was 11%, teaching staff was 12%. Primary reason for departures is monetary/lack of competitive compensation.

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment
Aarre Anna	421025	Kindergarten/Pre-K
Baker-Hunger, Megan	180150	Kindergarten/Pre-K
Bell, Kim	382280	Special Education Teacher
Bennett, Kaitlyn	1009345	Upper Elementary: Grades 4-6
Booth, Meghan	486642	Science: Grades 7 & 8
Borkowski, Sandra	347177	Art
Carlson, Josh	510709	Kindergarten/Pre-K
Dubis, Chris	478314	Music, Instrumental Music
Hohensee, Pat	161429	Title I – Math
Johnson, Casey	1003171	Math: Grades 7 & 8
Johnson, Mindy	1011052	ADSI Behavior Interventionist
Kaul, Angela	1008848	Upper Elementary: Grades 4-6
Kruger, Laura	1008916	Social World, Erdkinder
McClatchey, Eldridge	510858	Physical Education
Merchlewitz, Shelly	333395	ADSI Math Intervention Teacher
O'Connell, Amy	494596	Upper Elementary: Grades 4-6
Porter, Kiersten	1008233	Lower Elementary: Grades 1-3
Salzmann, Linda	504716	ADSI Reading Intervention Teacher
Schillerstrom, Amy	1004683	Lower Elementary: Grades 1-3

Smith, Randi	501183	Floating Sub
Steinfeldt, Michaela	485123	Special Education Teacher
Swogger, Kristine	462637	Title I, EL
Weaver, Brooke	482591	Special Education Teacher
Webber, Susan	512149	Communication Arts/Literature: Grades 7 & 8
White, Mariah	478840	Lower Elementary: Grades 1-3

School Admissions and Enrollment

As a charter school, Bluffview Montessori School has a limited capacity to enroll students. We have identified the capacity for each grade level from kindergarten through sixth grade as 25 students. Total capacity for our Erdkinder program (7th – 8th grade) is 40 students. Most of our students enter the charter school program their Kindergarten year. Each year 25 Kindergarten positions are available. Preference is given to siblings of currently enrolled students and staff children. All remaining positions are filled via a public lottery.



Openings in the elementary and junior high grades occur only when a class is at less than capacity. If the number of applications exceeds the number of available spots, then available positions in those are filled by means of the public lottery. Preference is given to siblings of currently enrolled students and staff children. The procedures for the lottery and application form can be found on the following pages.

Policy 501

BLUFFVIEW MONTESSORI SCHOOL POLICY 501

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for enrollment of students to BMS.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Bluffview Board of Directors believes that parents have the responsibility to select the most appropriate educational programs for their children and that parental commitment to the educational program is a significant and positive choice. The Board also recognizes that choice in the selection of a public school provides parents and learners an opportunity to seek a school that best fits their needs and interests. This policy addresses the terms and conditions of student applications and enrollment into Bluffview Montessori School.

III. OPEN ENROLLMENT

A. General Application

1. Applications for all levels will be available on the school website or by request via phone or email.
2. Student applications for a school year that is in progress are accepted during the year. Students may be admitted if space is available throughout the year.
3. Applications will be made available for an upcoming school year on the first working day in January. Any applicants to be considered for the lottery process must have an application submitted to administration by the end of business on the last calendar day of that January.
4. Applications received beginning February 1st will be accepted and processed in the order they are received.
5. A new application must be submitted each year for any student that is not currently enrolled-they do not carry over from year to year.
 - a) Families of enrolled students will be sent an "Intent to Return" form each January to formally identify students that will not be returning the following year (for the purpose of potential recruitment).
 - b) Students that do not submit an Intent to Return Form will remain enrolled.

B. Eligibility

1. Tuition-based Pre-K
 - a) Children must be 33 months of age by their first date of attendance.

- b) Enrollment in each classroom environment shall not exceed 20 children, with a ratio of one adult per every ten children enrolled.
 - (1) There are 35 full time spots in total.
 - c) No preference for K enrollment may be given to BMS Pre-K students based on their attendance or enrollment in the Pre-K program.
- 2. BMS Public Charter School (K-8)
 - a) To attend Kindergarten, a student must be “at least 5 years of age on September 1 of the calendar year in which the school year for which the pupil seeks admission commences.” MN 124E.11
 - b) To attend first grade, a student must be “at least 6 years of age on September 1 of the calendar year in which the school year for which the pupil seeks admission commences or has completed Kindergarten.” MN 124E.11
 - c) Bluffview has philosophically chosen not to offer early Kindergarten (September 2 or later) or early first grade enrollment:
 - (1) “A charter school may establish and publish on its website a policy for admission of selected pupils at an earlier age, consistent with the enrollment process in [MN Statute 124E.11] paragraphs (b) and (c).
 - d) Student must be a Minnesota resident
 - (1) At least one of the student’s parents/legal guardians must be a MN resident.

C. Enrollment

- 1. All eligible students who submit a timely application shall be enrolled, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a class, grade level, program, or building.
 - a) If the number of applications exceeds the given capacity, students will be accepted by lottery.
 - (1) Levels
 - (a) CH: 60 students
 - (b) Elementary I & II: 75 students each
 - (c) Erdkinder: 40 students
 - (2) Grades
 - (a) Kindergarten: 25 students
 - (b) Elementary grades 1-6: 25 students each
 - (c) Middle school grades 7 & 8: 20 students each,
 - (3) Entire K-8 Public Charter school program: 215 students
 - (4) Entire Tuition based pre-k: 35 full time spots
 - b) The classroom or program level may only be overenrolled under special circumstances and at the discretion of the teaching level team.

2. Enrollment Preference will be given to
 - a) current staff children
 - b) siblings of currently enrolled children
 - c) Foster children of enrolled student's parents
 - d) **due to the fact that the BMS pre-k program is tuition-based, no preference may be given for enrollment into kindergarten based on pre-k enrollment. Refer to the previous two options.*
3. Once a student is enrolled in kindergarten or higher, that student is considered enrolled until the student is formally withdrawn or is expelled under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act.
4. Once a Pre-K student is enrolled, that student is considered enrolled in the Pre-K program until the student is formally withdrawn, is expelled under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, or until they apply for admission to and are enrolled in kindergarten.

D. Lottery Process

1. Applicants are populated onto a spreadsheet by grade
2. All returning K-7 students are enrolled in the next grade
3. All enrollment preferences are filled
4. Any grade that has more applications than spots (end of January) will have all of the applications entered into a lottery and drawn at random.
 - a) Students are admitted to the program in the order they are drawn, as capacity allows.
 - b) Once individual grades/levels have been filled, remaining applicants will be placed on a waiting list in the order they were drawn.
 - c) If a student is admitted through the general lottery and that student has one or more siblings/foster siblings in other grades also subject to a lottery, those students will be given preference.
 - d) If there are more siblings/foster siblings and/or staff children than available spots, separate lotteries will be held for those categories before the general lottery is held.
 - e) Regarding multiple birth/foster siblings are entered into a lottery (each by their own name), then if one of the siblings is drawn, the other siblings shall be admitted to the program.
 - (1) In the event that admission of multiple siblings fills the enrollment to capacity without each of them being enrolled, they will be placed as next on the waiting list.

E. Waiting Lists

1. Waiting lists are constructed in the order drawn in the lottery. After conclusion of the drawings, Bluffview shall add to the waiting lists on a first come first serve basis. This waiting list is used to fill

subsequent openings for the following academic year in the order populated onto the list.

- a) If the applicant being placed on the waiting list has sibling/staff preference they will move to the top of the waiting list but below any other sibling/staff preference students already on the waiting list.

IV. REQUIRED FORMS

- A. Application process
 - 1. Appropriate application form
- B. Enrollment process
 - 1. Enrollment form for new students
 - 2. Student Information form
 - 3. Health form including immunization records
 - 4. Emergency information
 - 5. Contract form and deposit for Children's House students
 - 6. Early Childhood Screening records (Kindergarten only)
 - 7. Previous school records including any Individual Education Plan (IEP) information.

Legal References:

MN Statute 124E.11: Admission Requirements and Enrollment
MN Statute 124E.06

Application

Bluffview Montessori School
1321 Gilmore Avenue
Winona, MN 55987
507-452-2807

2023-2024

SCHOOL APPLICATION FORM

F
OR OFFICE USE ONLY
DATE RECEIVED ____ ENROLL
DATE__ ROOM/GRADE____ BIRTH CERT.
ATTCH. Y or N
MARSS # __

NOTICE TO PARENT/GUARDIAN: Tennessee Warning-MN Stat. 13.04.subd. 2: As a part of the permanent record for all students registered in the Bluffview Montessori Charter School/ISD 4001, information deemed private or confidential is collected. This data will be available only to district employees on a need-to-know basis. Failure to provide complete and accurate information may result in inaccurate records and incomplete services.

STUDENT INFORMATION

_____ Last Name (Legal Name)	_____ First	_____ Middle
_____ Parent's Last Name	_____ Parent's First Name	
_____ Address		
_____ City	_____ State	_____ Zip
_____ Home Phone #	_____ Cell Phone #	
_____ Email		

Please indicate grade

Charter School (circle one) KG 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Extended Day Programs

The YMCA runs the afterschool care program. Information can be disseminated in the Bluffview Office, or by contacting the YMCA directly.

Student Background and Demographics

Student Enrollment and Attrition

This table identifies the number of students enrolled at Bluffview from the 2019-2020 to the 2023-2024 school years. Data is based on October 1 Membership Count.

GRADE	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Kindergarten	26	24	25	24	25
One	25	26	25	25	25
Two	25	26	25	25	25
Three	25	23	25	25	25
Four	25	23	24	25	25
Five	26	24	24	23	24
Six	25	25	24	24	25
Seven	23	20	22	23	22
Eight	14	21	18	18	19
Total	214	212	212	212	215

Other Student Demographics

2023 from MN Report Card

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Entire Student Body
Native American	0
Asian	1.4
Hispanic	2.4
Black, not Hispanic	0
White, not Hispanic	88.7
Two or more races	7.5

Student Participation

Attendance

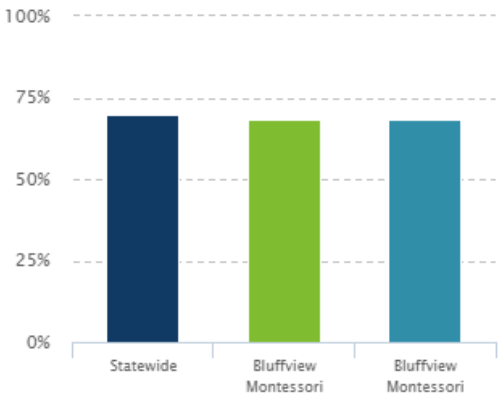
The *actual attendance* rate for students during the 2022-2023 school year was 94.04% (JMC).

The *Consistent Attendance* as measured by the North Star Reporting system state 68.4% for FY22 (MN Report Card)-this has been reported to MDE as potentially erroneous.

The number of students attending school regularly

This is a measure of students who attend school on a regular basis and are not frequently absent. A student is considered consistently attending if they attend more than 90 percent of the time the student is enrolled during the year.

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	Statewide	Bluffview Montessori	Bluffview Montessori
Consistent attendance	69.8%	68.4%	68.4%
Count	781,072	187	187

Educational Approach and Curriculum

Describe the school's key pedagogical approaches and how they align to the vision/mission.



Bluffview's vision is "Empowered learners unfolding their full potential as whole and unique persons in a global community." We pursue this vision through a distinctive Montessori approach that embodies individualized instruction, mixed age groupings, an international curriculum, a prepared environment, and Montessori teaching materials.

The Montessori Method of education is based on the principle that education is to be an aid to life, and that it should go far beyond the simple acquisition of factual knowledge in various areas. Montessori schools help children develop a positive attitude and a curiosity toward learning. Bluffview's educational philosophy is inspired by the research of Dr. Maria Montessori, by her models for the classroom, and by the developmental learning materials she created.

The following are the basic tenets of the Bluffview Montessori School curriculum:

- Individualized instruction and a respect for each child's interests and style of learning
- Extensive use of Montessori materials designed to help develop concentration, coordination, and independence, as well as to give concrete experiences of academic concepts
- A classroom community founded on respect for self, others, and the environment that allows the child to develop his or her social sense and awareness of others in a natural and unhurried way
- Opportunities to ask questions, to seek many answers, and to work on projects of special interest
- Class groupings where children of different ages work together. Older children inspire younger children, and by helping them, gain confidence and a sense of responsibility
- An orderly and peaceful educational environment in which the child develops enthusiasm, self- motivation, concentration, and the joy of learning

The academic program at Bluffview Montessori School is based upon specific grade level outcomes and is aligned with Minnesota academic standards. Classes at the school are organized in mixed-age groupings.

Children's House (Ages 3-Kindergarten)

Dr. Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. The young child possesses what Montessori termed "the absorbent mind" and seeks to build or construct his very being. Dr. Montessori felt, therefore, that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

For that reason, most lessons in the Children's House environment are given as individual presentations.

This objective is approached in two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his/her own choice rather than by being taught; and second, by helping the child perfect his natural tools for learning, so that the child's abilities will be maximized for future learning situations.

Didactic Montessori materials have this dual, long-range purpose in addition to their immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child.

Math, language, geography, and science are introduced and explored. Sensorial exercises, social graces, self-care, and care of the environment are also key components of the Children's House. Kindergarten students continue their education within this mixed-age environment and emphasis is put on continued personal development in the areas of advanced reading and mathematics, science, geography, and cultural subjects. Self-care, independence, and social graces are also taught and encouraged.



E1 & E2 (Elementary)



The physical and psychological characteristics of the child begin to change as he or she enters the elementary years. At this age, children have an intellectual power unsurpassed at any other and are natural explorers of the world around them. They bring to their work two important tools: powerful reasoning minds and the ability to imagine. These intellectual tools, combined with a natural urge to collaborate with peers, opens a field of exploration so vast that virtually any concept or system can be explored and integrated into a comprehensive whole.

In these learning environments, children delve deeply into the process of researching, classifying and ordering phases of history, botany, geology, geometry, language, and mathematics. Subject areas are integrated throughout the curriculum rather than being presented as separate disciplines. Teachers use stories, pictures, charts, and timelines to enrich the children's understanding and spark their interest in learning.

Mixed age learning continues in the elementary years. At Bluffview, our Lower Elementary program serves students in first through third grade and our Upper Elementary program serves students in fourth through sixth grade.

Lessons change from individualized to small, collaborative group lessons.

Erdkinder (Middle School)

Bluffview's middle school program (gr. 7&8) addresses the needs of the adolescent student in an environment created specifically for seventh and eighth grade students. Students and teachers work together to promote a community atmosphere of learning. The middle school strives to fill the needs of the early adolescent and provides a safe, secure and developmentally appropriate environment to assist students in reaching their full potential.

Bluffview's middle school curriculum is focused on developing world citizens and cultivating life/work skills. These skills are acquired and refined through the application of language, mathematics, science, and cultural studies to specific enterprises and community involvement projects. Preparation for becoming and developing as a contributing member of society is woven into all aspects of the program.



The program also allows students to pursue research in areas of interest and to extend their learning beyond the classroom. This is accomplished through independent study, extended field trips, outreach, a student-run business, and community internships. Parents, teachers and students work in partnership to guide the self-actualization of the student.

Specialist programs



Art, physical education, vocal and instrumental music programs provide students with a balanced approach to integrating academics and daily life. Licensed teachers in each specialty area are employed to ensure that high quality programs are delivered.

Describe the school's key process to review and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and curriculum.

District curriculum is reviewed on a continuous-cycle to identify strengths and weaknesses of instruction and curriculum and to ensure career and college-readiness leading to the world's best workforce.

District curriculum and instruction will be reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness in relation to best practice and student outcomes. Strategies for improving instruction, curriculum and student achievement will be identified and implemented. Instruction and assessment are aligned with local, state or national academic standards, instructional strategies are evaluated, and new instructional strategies may be embedded in the curriculum. Staff are expected to monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed to facilitate student learning.



The elements below are connected to a continuous improvement process that reviews, supports and/or evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction.

- Curriculum review cycle which includes curriculum alignment to MN State Standards
- Curriculum implementation of new / innovative ideas
- Review of disaggregated MCA data and District Benchmark Reports
- Teacher evaluation system that targets improving instruction through reflection and professional growth
- Peer Learning Communities developing “I Can” statements and Common Formative Assessments to guide instruction
- New teacher mentoring program
- ADSIS program provides supplemental reading, math and behavior instruction
- Title I program supports reading and math instruction
- School wide culture/climate initiatives
- District Technology Committee provides direction for the technology needs of our district
- Culture of continuous improvement: PLC Teams, Educator Evaluation and Peer Review
- MTSS team/admin/general education teachers review of FastBridge data each month
 - Tier 1 students - Core instruction provided for all students
 - Tier 2 students - Supplemental instruction and/or classroom interventions provided for students identified as needing additional assistance
 - Tier 3 students - Problem Solving Teams follow the Response to Intervention process to assist students needing more intensive interventions

Describe the process for assessing and evaluating each student's progress toward meeting state and local academic standards.

All students are evaluated each semester on their progress through the classroom curriculum using a narrative report.

Bluffview utilizes Fastbridge assessments in Reading and Mathematics in the fall, winter, and spring. Data from these assessments combined with teacher input is used to place students into interventions. Students in interventions are progress monitored to evaluate growth. We use the Fastbridge behavioral screener, SAEBERS, with K-8 students as well as with the Preschool students to populate a student group for the Behavioral Interventionist.

Bluffview utilizes MN State Assessments (MCAIII) in math, reading, and science along with the Pearson District Benchmark Reports to examine student progress towards meeting MN state standards. The school DAC puts forth great effort to ensure that we have maximum annual participation for the MCA assessments.

Describe the special education program.

Bluffview Montessori School has staff members licensed to provide special education and related services for those students who meet criteria and have special education needs. Parents and students are directly involved with school and appropriate outside agency staff in the development of the special education program and the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) for school-age children. Hiawatha Valley Education District provides our Special Education Director and programmatic oversight.

Students are eligible for special education services until the IEP Team decides to terminate services. Students remain with their general education peers in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to the extent the IEP Team determines is appropriate. Special education program evaluation is accomplished through a single strategic plan to improve due process compliance and program results for students with disabilities.

Describe the English learner program.

Bluffview Montessori School offers an educational program to meet the needs of students who are English Language Learners in grades K-8. This program addresses two areas: language acquisition and cultural adjustment.

In the area of language acquisition, the goal is to provide students with the opportunity to develop communication skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, thereby enabling the students to be successful within the academic general education classroom.

The program will assist the students through their cultural adjustment by helping them develop an understanding of American culture. At the same time, the students will be encouraged to share their cultural backgrounds and realize the importance of their role in a multicultural society.

Equitable Access to Excellent Teachers

WBWF requires districts to have a process in place to ensure low-income students, students of color, and American Indian students are not taught at disproportionate rates by ineffective, inexperienced, and out-of-field teachers. The legislation also requires that districts have strategies to increase equitable access to effective and diverse teachers.

Bluffview places great value on and invests in excellent teachers. We always strive to hire quality, in-field licensed teachers. One aspect of teaching at Bluffview is that 10 of 13 general education teachers are sent back to school upon being hired for at least one year of Montessori Pedagogical instruction and practice. The school reimburses them over a four-year period for the tuition incurred.

If a teacher is identified as ineffective within our Evaluation Framework (Danielson) then administration evaluates the potential of the teacher, and may choose to either dismiss the teacher or help them create a targeted Professional Improvement Plan.



Regarding annual student placement assignments to new classrooms, we undergo a thorough process to balance classrooms by evaluating academics, behaviors, and personalities of the students to match them with teachers and classroom environments that will help them flourish as learners. Economic status/race, has no place in the discussion.

72/247 students identified as FRP SY 2022-23	% of students taught by an experienced teacher (3 years/+)	% of students taught by effective teacher	% of students taught by in-field, licensed teacher
Free/Reduced Price Students	59/72 = 80.8% of Low-income students taught by experienced teacher	100% All teachers classified as effective according to the District Teacher Evaluation Model	100% All general education teachers are licensed in-field
Non FRP Students	141/175 = 80.6% of Non-low-income students taught by experienced teacher	100% All teachers classified as effective according to the District Teacher Evaluation Model	100% All general education teachers are licensed in-field

School goals and Benchmarks for Instruction and Student Achievement: Primary Purpose M.S. 124E.01, Additional Purpose M.S.120B.11

Bluffview Montessori School 2020-2021 Reading Goal
<p>Goal: Increase the percent of students scoring at the 30thile or higher on the Fastbridge areading assessment from 83% in the fall to 87% on the spring areading assessment.</p> <p>Result: 84% not met</p>
Bluffview Montessori School 2021-2022 Reading Goal
<p>Proficiency Goal: Increase the percent of students proficient on the MCA III reading assessment from 64.6% in 2021 to 67.1% in 2022. <i>*Our proficiency scores from 2019 to 2021 dropped 5%. This goal represents year one of a 2-year plan to return to a pre-covid proficiency rate of 69.6% on the 2023 MCA III.</i></p> <p>Result: 69.3% Met</p>
Bluffview Montessori School 2022-2023 Reading Goal
<p>Proficiency Goal: Increase the percent of students proficient on the MCA III reading assessment from 69.3% in 2022 to 70% in 2023. <i>*Our proficiency scores from 2019 to 2021 dropped 5%. This goal represents year two of a 2-year plan to return to a pre-covid proficiency rate of 69.6% pr better on the 2023 MCA III.</i></p> <p>Result: 71.9% Met</p>
Bluffview Montessori School 2023-2024 Reading Goal
<p>Goal: Increase the percent of students proficient on the MCA III reading assessment from 71.9% in 2023 to 72.5% in 2024.</p> <p>Result:</p>

Bluffview Montessori School 2020-2021 Math Goal
<p>Proficiency Goal: Increase the percent of students scoring at the 30thile or higher on the Fastbridge amath assessment from 83% in the fall to 87% on the spring assessment.</p> <p>Result: 86% not met</p>
Bluffview Montessori School 2021-2022 Math Goal
<p>Proficiency Goal: Increase the percent of students proficient on the MCA III math assessment from 49.2% in 2021 to 51.7% in 2022. <i>*Our proficiency scores from 2019 to 2021 dropped 4.8%. This goal represents year one of a 2 year plan to return to a pre-covid proficiency rate of 54% on the 2023 MCA III.</i></p> <p>Result: 51.6% Not met by 0.1%</p>
Bluffview Montessori School 2022-2023 Math Goal
<p>Proficiency Goal: Increase the percent of students proficient on the MCA III math assessment from 51.6% in 2022 to 54.0% in 2023. <i>*Our proficiency scores from 2019 to 2021 dropped 4.8%. This goal represents year one of a 2 year plan to return to a pre-covid proficiency rate of 54% on the 2023 MCA III.</i></p> <p>Result: 47.4% Not met</p>
Bluffview Montessori School 2023-2024 Math Goal
<p>Proficiency Goal: Increase the percent of students proficient on the MCA III math assessment from 47.4% in 2023 to 51.0% in 2024.</p> <p>Result:</p>

Bluffview Montessori School Read Well by Third Grade Goal 2022-2023
<p>Goal: Increase the percent of third grade students meeting or exceeding FastBridge literacy benchmarks (areading) from 79% on the Fall screener to 82% on the Spring screener.</p> <p>Result: 85% Met</p>
Bluffview Montessori School Read Well by Third Grade Goal 2023-2024
<p>Goal: Increase the percent of third grade students meeting or exceeding FastBridge literacy benchmarks (areading) from 85% on the Fall screener to 87% on the Spring screener.</p> <p>Result:</p>

Bluffview Montessori School All Students College Ready Goals 2022-2023
Goal: All grade 8 students will participate in a career exploration assessment. Result: 100% Met
Bluffview Montessori School All Students College Ready Goals 2023-2024
Goal: All grade 8 students will participate in a career exploration assessment. Result:

Bluffview Montessori School All Children Ready for School Goal 2022-2023
Goal: The PK4 students will increase their phonetic awareness from an average of 3.4 cursive letters/sounds mastered in mid-November to an average of 12 letters/sounds mastered during the spring Fastbridge screening window. Result: 14.3 letter sounds/student Met
Bluffview Montessori School All Children Ready for School Goal 2022-2023
Goal: The PK4 students will increase their phonetic awareness from an average of 4.6 cursive letters/sounds mastered in mid-November to an average of 13 letters/sounds mastered during the spring Fastbridge screening window. Result:

Reading Achievement Gap Reduction Goals

Bluffview Montessori School FRP student reading achievement gap reduction goal 2022-2023
Goal: Increase the percent of FRP students proficient on the MCA III reading assessment from 58.3% in 2022 to 59.3% in 2023. Result: 59.5% Met
Bluffview Montessori School SPED student reading achievement gap reduction goal 2022-2023
Goal: Increase the percent of FRP students proficient on the MCA III reading assessment from 59.3% in 2023 to 60.3% in 2024. Result:

**Our Sped and Soc categories are too small to be reported according to the MN report card (CTSTR designation).*

Reading Achievement Gap Reduction Data 2022 vs 2023

% Proficient on MCA	2022 Reading	2023 Reading	Result change
Free/Reduced	14/24 58.3%	22/37 59.5%	1.2%
Non FRP	72/98 73.5%	75/98 76.5%	3.0%
Gap	15.2%	17%	

Math Achievement Gap Reduction Goals

Bluffview Montessori School FRP student math achievement gap reduction goal 2022-2023
Goal: Increase the percent of FRP students proficient on the MCA III math assessment from 38.7% in 2021 to 39.7% in 2022. Result: 32.4% Not met
Bluffview Montessori School FRP student math achievement gap reduction goal 2023-2024
Goal: Increase the percent of FRP students proficient on the MCA III math assessment from 32.4% in 2023 to 37.4% in 2024. Result:

**Our Sped and Soc categories are too small to be reported according to the MN report card (CTSTR designation).*

Math Achievement Gap Reduction Data 2022 vs 2023

% proficient on MCA	2022 Math	2023 Math	Result change
Free/Reduced	10/24 41.7%	12/37 32.4%	-9.3%
Non FRP	54/98 55.1%	52/98 53.1%	-2.0%
Gap	13.4%	20.7%	

Achievement Gap Narrative

Though we are mindful of the small number of students included in each subgroup, we fully intend to close the achievement gap. There is work to be done. The school is tackling this work energetically and with a sense of urgency and optimism. A variety of strategies are in place to improve student performance including:

- Ensuring alignment of Montessori curriculum to State Standards. Our focus remains on strong Tier 1 instruction and the generation of data in math and reading that directly correlates to areas that need improvement
- Evaluation of cross membership of multiple subgroups: how many and how can we help the students in multiple subgroups in a more targeted manner
- Providing new teachers with strong, targeted professional development
- Meeting in data teams/level intervention teams at least one time/month to:
 - Determine whether Tier 1 instruction is meeting at least the needs of 80% of students
 - Identify students in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 support
 - Review data on which specific skills appear to be relative strengths or weaknesses

Additionally, we intend to:

- Examine the relationship between the 35% increase in FRP students (previous page) and the reduction of the FRP student's achievement levels in math.
- Continue to develop MTSS (Multi-Tier System of Supports) plan, with research around Standard Treatment Protocol for Title and ADSIS interventions Fastbridge data analysis, and the use of EduClimber as our data warehouse
- We have adopted the MnMTSS committee framework this year (SY 23-24), and those committees are working to find their footing.
- Offer/develop additional opportunities for those that are demonstrating the largest learning loss from Covid times-notably the SY 23-24 grade 4 students in reading and math
- Continue to provide specific training on using data to guide instruction, including the examination of the Pearson District Benchmark reports for the last 4 years to identify consistent weaknesses
- Include level teams, including both general and special education staff, in examining progress monitoring data more frequently
- Conduct fidelity checks to monitor if curriculum and interventions are being implemented as intended
- Re-examine the effectiveness coefficients of the intervention programs that are being used, replacing ineffective curriculum programs with new, research based effective ones-notably in the area of math
- Re-evaluate our math practices and materials as that is our weakest scoring area according to the MCA data.

Innovative Practices

Character-based Learning

The Bluffview Montessori curriculum offers many opportunities to integrate character-based learning with elements of the Peace Curriculum. Students learn practical skills necessary to develop qualities of being a good citizen. Respect for self, others, the environment and the community is expected of all students and is the guiding force in everything students do during the school day. Thematic learning activities also encourage student learning to extend outward into the community. During the 2021-2022 school year, educators also used strength-based strategies from The Virtues Project and Core Virtues to further create a culture of caring and character.

Focus on Peace

Bluffview Montessori is an International Peace Site. International Peace Sites commit to five peace actions:

- Seek peace within yourself and others
- Reach out in service
- Protect the environment
- Respect diversity
- Be a responsible citizen of the world



Explorers of the Week are often recognized for displaying virtues.



Multi-age Learning Environments

The multi-aged classrooms of Montessori schools, like Bluffview, allow students to stretch their minds rather than being constrained by artificial barriers such as grade or age. When a teacher gives a lesson intended for seven-year-olds, for instance, any student in the room may attend, including younger students who are interested. Teachers consciously prepare the environment so that instruction is inclusive and differentiated as much as possible. Multi-aged classrooms also give students additional opportunities to learn leadership skills and learn how to live in a cooperative social environment.



Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Bluffview has refined its long standing RTI model to match the MnMTSS framework and the suggested committees therein. The school was approved for ADSIS funding for FY23 & 24, and the school board budgets for three ADSIS interventionists (Tier 3) to work closely with Title 1 teachers (Tier 2) and provide additional instruction to students as needed in reading, math, and/or behavior.

Immersion



The Encarta Dictionary defines the word immerse as: to become completely occupied with something, giving all your time, energy, or concentration to it. Immersions at Bluffview Montessori School are key experiences specifically planned for Erdkinder (junior high) students to travel, study, and work together and usually involve several days away from school and home.

During a normal school year, our 7th and 8th grade students spend three days at Eagle Bluff Learning Center. They also may have had an overnight canoe/camping trip at Prairie Island, Whitewater State Park or several other day-long immersion trips.

Erdkinder students also participate in the community and explored future careers through internships. The junior high students initiate contact with community businesses, created resumes, and interviewed for internship

opportunities. Each student spent several days working alongside community business leaders and shared their experiences with classmates upon returning to school.

Micro-economy

Our adolescent program includes a business education typically not experienced until adulthood.



Bluffview middle school students help to run a community coffee house once a month. This foundation provides a deeper understanding of adult life and the role that finances play in personal responsibility and social organization.

Running a business first hand offers students early exposure to the meaning of money and the basis of economic systems. Students plan, operate, and account for business ventures related to the coffee house. The students come to understand principles of supply and demand, marketing, accounting, use of capital resources, and division of labor as they contribute to the local economy.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS is a school-wide framework for organizing and creating a positive school climate. It is used to build the capacity of school teams to identify clear behavior outcomes for all staff and students, utilize evidence-based practices to achieve those outcomes, and understand data/information used to support sustainable, safe and positive learning environments.

In 2015, the Bluffview PBIS leadership team completed two years of training with the Minnesota Department of Education to support understanding and implementation of School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS). Our shared behavioral expectations for student expectations are based upon the “3 Respects” at Bluffview- Respect for Self, Respect for Others, and Respect for the Environment. The PBIS committee reviewed SEL curriculums and selected BASE and PATHS to add to the school curriculum for 2022-23 and beyond.



Restorative Practices/Non-Exclusionary Discipline

Bluffview was fortunate enough to receive a Non-Exclusionary Discipline grant for FY23 & 24. A leadership team took on this task voluntarily, with the hope and intent of building our student support programming in a way that does not hinge on punitive disciplinary actions like suspensions/expulsions. Our leadership groups work is rooted in the staff’s belief in building positive relationships with students (and parents), with a mantra that “you cannot repair

relationships that you don't have." The biggest, very positive piece generated from this work and the NED grant is our implementation of school wide Restorative Practices. The leadership team attended a four-day training in June of 2023, and then the training was brought to Bluffview for all staff for a three-day immersive experience in August of 2023. We have two follow up training dates currently set for during the SY 23-24 school year as ongoing professional development. Now restorative practices/circle are an expectation in the general education classrooms, counseling times, and follow ups to office referrals/ behavior reports with students as a growing part of the school culture.

Educational Partnerships

Bluffview works collaboratively with two local universities and a Technical College in Winona to increase their student involvement. Students in teacher education training programs serve as volunteers, complete field experiences, and student teach in our school whenever possible. This provides our students with extra tutoring and leadership models, and creates beneficial community partnerships with Winona State University, St. Mary's University, and Southeast Technical College.

Mental Health

Bluffview partners with Hiawatha Valley Mental Health (HVMH) to deliver mental health support to our students. HVMH engages Bluffview students in School Linked mental health services by providing therapists that come to the school to administer their services. Bluffview provides the referrals, and the space for the therapists to work with our students. This is currently funded through a Winona County grant. If that grant were to end, Bluffview is committed to continuing to offer this important service to our students.

Bluffview also works with Family and Children's Center to cover overflow mental health needs by leveraging ESSER monies. We also work with Ellie Therapy to direct our Carry-On club on Thursday afternoons.

Assessment Plan

Universal screening (FastBridge) takes place three times a year to identify students who may be at risk for reading and math difficulties. Criterion-referenced target scores have been established for each measure at each administration that reflect the expected grade level performance. FastBridge SAEBRS and MySAEBRS are also used as initial screening tools for populating our behavior intervention programming. The assessment calendar is located on the school website (<https://www.bluffviewmontessori.org/explorers/assessments/>).

Bluffview always has very high participation in the spring MCA III assessment as well, and may administer the MTAS as deemed appropriate.

Classroom assessment is the constant and ongoing observation and assessment that occurs in the Montessori classroom. Informal assessment and qualitative or anecdotal notes are consistently taken, and at the elementary level the exit ticket concept is employed with group lessons. If a student demonstrates mastery, they are excused. Those that need additional support receive it in an extended lesson. There is not a lot of quantified data in the Montessori format. That said, we are reviewing ways to generate more data. The Erdkinder program does, as a transitional program to more traditional high school settings, provide a traditional grading framework and reports that through a system called Think Wave. Student reports can be viewed in real time by parents and students, and may be set for scheduled email updates.

Assessments are used for a variety of purposes:

1. to populate interventions by screening students for reading and math proficiency, including FastBridge the early reading composite and CBM reading for dyslexia specifically,
2. to systematically monitor progress over time for students in interventions,
3. to determine students' level of proficiency and whether they have met grade-level reading goals,
4. to determine or diagnose potential sources of difficulty for students not making adequate progress despite the use of intense intervention,
5. and to provide useful data to grade/level teams for planning and instruction.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments

MCA Comparison Chart

2022-2023

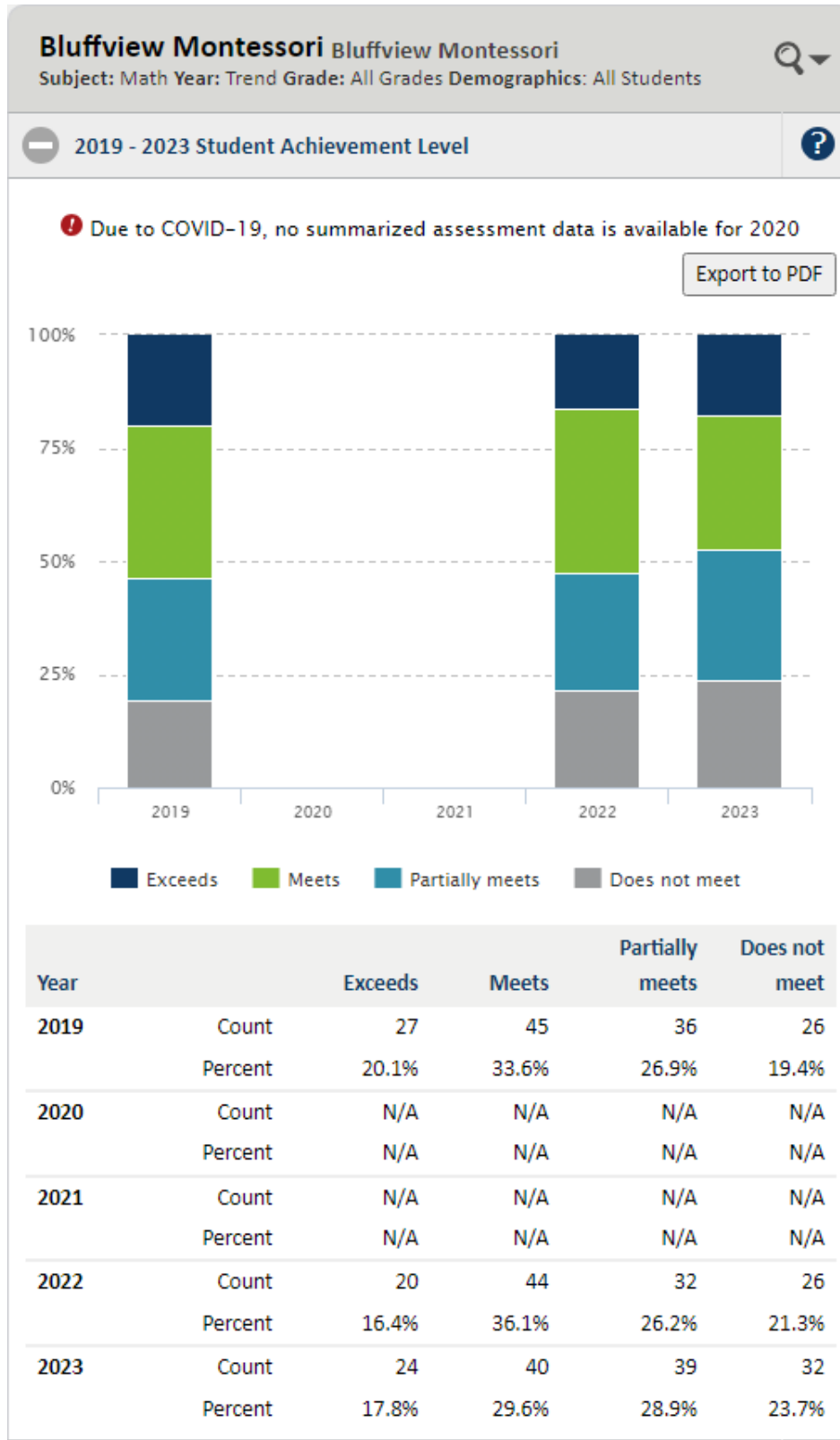
MCA (% proficient)	BMS	MN / State	WAPS	La Crescent Mont
Math 23'	47.4	46.0	39.1	38.4
Math 22'	51.6	41.7	32.0	13.8
Change	-4.2	+4.3	+7.1	+24.6
Reading 23'	71.9	49.9	41.1	73.0
Reading 22'	69.3	48.6	37.6	62.1
Change	+2.6	+1.3	+3.5	+10.9
Science 23'	51.3	39.2	32.1	50.0
Science 22'	61.0	41.3	34.6	CTSTR
Change	-9.7	-2.1	-2.5	NA

2021-2022 for reference

MCA (% proficient)	BMS	MN / State	WAPS	La Crescent Mont
Math 22'	51.6	41.7	32.0	13.8
Math 21'	49.2	44.2	32.7	12.5
Change	+2.4	-2.5	-0.7	+1.3
Reading 22'	69.3	48.6	37.6	62.1
Reading 21'	64.6	52.5	40.2	49.1
Change	+4.7	-3.9	-2.6	+13.0
Science 22'	61.0	41.3	34.6	CTSTR
Science 21'	48.9	43.1	33.7	CTSTR
Change	+12.1	-1.8	+0.9	NA

*WAPS (Winona Area Public Schools) and La Crescent Montessori are our comparable schools for our authorizer evaluation process.

Summary Proficiency MCA III Math 2023 All Grades



*It is unclear why the Math 21' data is missing from the MN Report Card-MDE has been notified of the discrepancy.

Summary Proficiency MCA III Reading 2023 All Grades

Bluffview Montessori Bluffview Montessori

Subject: Reading Year: Trend Grade: All Grades Demographics: All Students

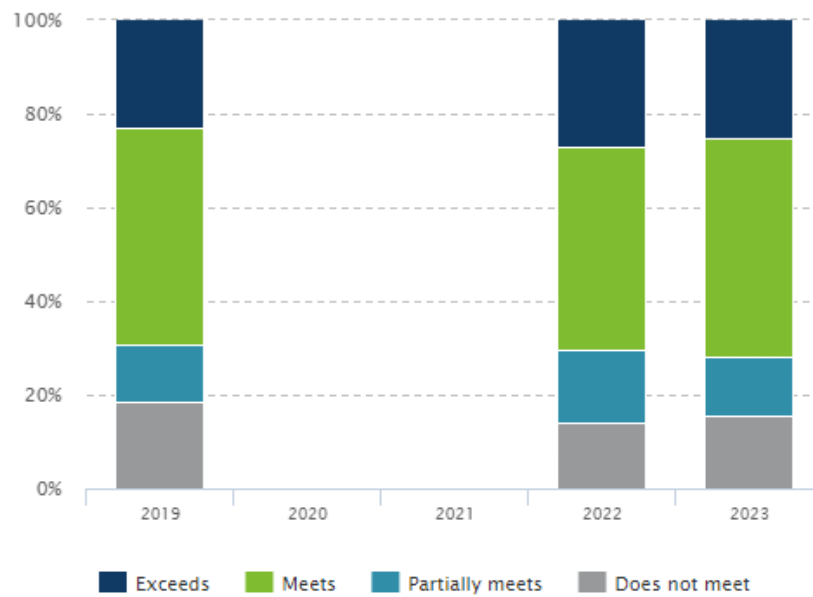


2019 - 2023 Student Achievement Level



Due to COVID-19, no summarized assessment data is available for 2020

Export to PDF



Year		Exceeds	Meets	Partially meets	Does not meet
2019	Count	31	62	16	25
	Percent	23.1%	46.3%	11.9%	18.7%
2020	Count	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Percent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021	Count	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Percent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2022	Count	33	53	19	17
	Percent	27.0%	43.4%	15.6%	13.9%
2023	Count	34	63	17	21
	Percent	25.2%	46.7%	12.6%	15.6%

*It is unclear why the Reading 21' data is missing from the MN Report Card-MDE has been notified of the discrepancy.

Summary Proficiency MCA III Science 2023 All Grades

Bluffview Montessori Bluffview Montessori

Subject: Science Students Included: All tested Year: Trend Grade: All
Grades Demographics: All Students

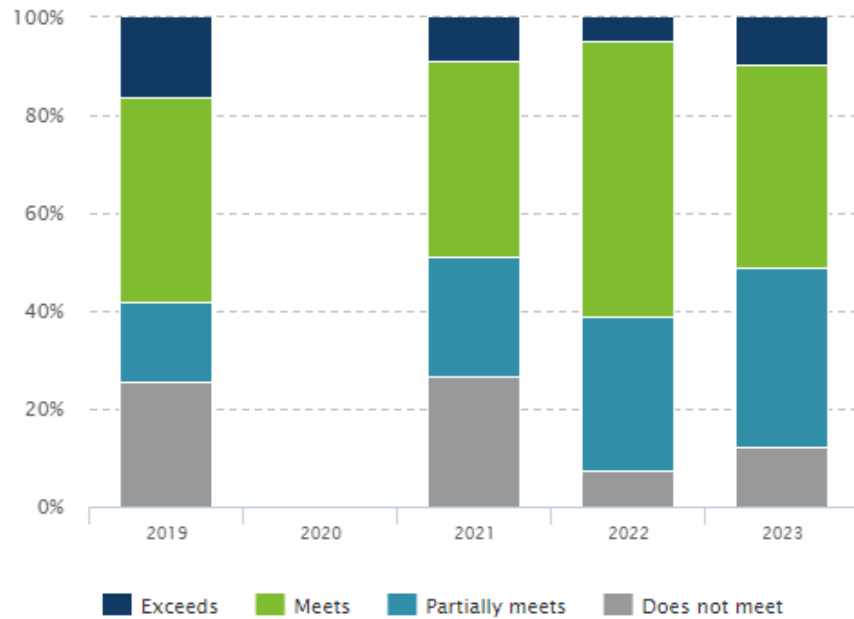


2019 - 2023 Student Achievement Level



Due to COVID-19, no summarized assessment data is available for 2020

Export to PDF



Year		Exceeds	Meets	Partially meets	Does not meet
2019	Count	7	18	7	11
	Percent	16.3%	41.9%	16.3%	25.6%
2020	Count	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Percent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021	Count	4	18	11	12
	Percent	8.9%	40.0%	24.4%	26.7%
2022	Count	2	23	13	3
	Percent	4.9%	56.1%	31.7%	7.3%
2023	Count	4	17	15	5
	Percent	9.8%	41.5%	36.6%	12.2%

Program Challenges

Maintaining an Authentic Montessori School



Quality Montessori environments include a Montessori-trained teacher and a teaching assistant. Bluffview's commitment to staff classrooms in this manner greatly impacts our budget and teacher salaries. We will continue to seek out funding from other sources, including fundraising and grant opportunities that will increase our general revenue.

Many skills that are taught in a Montessori school are difficult to measure. We emphasize development in independence, self-direction, inner discipline and peaceful resolution skills. We focus on practical life skills and how they can be applied through service to the community. All of these skills, while necessary for success, are very difficult to measure.

Testing presents a challenge to some of our students, simply because it is not a common practice here, and doesn't always reflect accurate student progress. The use of Montessori materials offers students concrete experiences which guide them toward abstraction. Although we consistently observe

student mastery in our classrooms, our students are not always able to demonstrate mastery through standardized tests. We implement test-taking skills into our curriculum and provide opportunities for students to practice simulated tests prior to actual assessments.

Where we see the most discrepancy between what children do in the classroom and what they demonstrate in their standardized assessments is in math. The school upgraded its subscriptions to an on-line math and ELA practice software (IXL) in an effort to help the children make the leap from the concrete world of Montessori math to the abstract world of demonstrating their skills on the computer. This software is used in the classroom in limited amounts and for the purpose of supporting the children in learning how to demonstrate what they do know on the computer vs. the Montessori materials. The program is also available for students to utilize from home for additional practice. We also added Razz Kids, Epic, and Lexia Core5 for our lowest students as Covid rebuilding measures in an afterschool club and interventionist tools.

Future Plans

Bluffview discusses plans for the future quite often. The school does have a 5-year strategic plan that we are working to implement. The plan has five overarching goals:

1. Increase annual fundraising efforts to sustain school programs
2. Increase staff retention by increasing compensation while maintaining the financial health of the school
3. Increase awareness of the benefits of a Montessori education
4. Grow the staff culture at Bluffview
5. Develop a plan for the future of the school facilities

This plan was updated in 2019 and extends into 2025. It contains some aggressive but attainable goals. This plan was devised to have all five goals that will grow together in a way that takes the already very strong foundation of Bluffview Montessori and grows it into an organization that is prepared to possibly take a much bigger step in the future: adding a high school. This is something that is often discussed but never very seriously. If we are successful in implementing our strategic plan, it could become a reality.

Beyond a high school expansion, we do have a few other “brick and mortar” plans. The school was finally able to build a garage, as the small storage shed was no longer adequate to meet our needs. The dream of a new gym (the current one is also the cafeteria and auditorium) and a new art room would allow us to expand internal storage and add 2 offices. Those plans remain financial unlikelihood’s at best. With those in mind, the new Universal meals for K-12 legislation has put us in a position where the kitchen struggles to meet the increase in service due strictly to the amount of space and kitchen arrangement. This needs funding to upgrade the food service capacity to meet the increased need. We have also had an increase in special education students, leading us to a place where we need a resource room for the special education students. This really hinges on the idea of a new art room, allowing the computer lab to relocate which is where the resource room would be created.

Curriculum wise, one goal is to complete the science alignment project we started last year, then to jump into the ELA standards and curriculum this spring (2024). This will be done in a way that emphasizes and brings to the forefront the strengths of the Montessori method and philosophy. One goal is to have a one-year turnaround on the ELA alignment so we can revisit the math work that has been done in the past.

One final goal for the financial future of the school is to get to a place where we can afford to pay for Montessori training for new teaching staff up front as opposed to the current method of making them pay for it and reimbursing over a few years after the completion of the degree. We were able to shift to paying half of it in real time, then reimbursing the other half over 4 years upon the completion of the degree. The expenditures on training plays a major role in the need for high teacher retainment as it costs approximately \$32,000 per staff member to train the E1 and E2 teachers in the Montessori philosophy. We currently have over half the Montessori staff either in training or being compensated upon the completion of that training.

Finances and Budget

Bluffview contracts with to manage our accounting services, audit preparation, payroll processing, grant management, financial reporting and other financial management services. Partnering with Creative Planning's (formerly BerganKDV or BKDV) professional business management team allows Bluffview's administration to concentrate on keeping its teaching mission clear and focused.

Bluffview Montessori School undergoes an annual audit (CliftonLarsonAllen) after June 30 of each year, which must be completed by the end of November as per our Bond agreement. The fiscal audit for the year ending June 30, 2022 (FY22) stated that Bluffview was issued a clean audit. The audit for the year ending June 30, 2023 (FY23) was still in process at the time this report had to be approved to the BMS school board for submission to our authorizer. Audit documents are available upon request.

As a charter school, Bluffview's financial health and stability is primarily dependent on student enrollment. Therefore, maintaining full enrollment is key for our financial health.

[FY23 Revised Budget and FY24 Original Budget - Approved by Board May 18, 2023](#)

Long Range Budget

[Long Range Budget \(5 years\)](#)

**This long-range budget link is from 5/26/22. Again, this report's required approval date does not allow for an updated long-range budget to be included. At the 11/16/23 Bluffview School Board meeting a new/updated/amended budget will be offered to the Board to approve. This will be post-audit completion (theoretically). Upon approval of that amended budget, an updated long-range budget will be drafted.*

The school's financial controller can be contacted at:

Travis Berends

Controller, Outsourced Business Accounting

Travis.berends@creativeplanning.com

Direct: 952.563.6849

www.creativeplanning.com

5454 W 110th Street, Overland Park, KS 66211

Authorizer and Service Learning: Statutory Purpose II M.S. 124E.01

Effective July 1, 2021 Bluffview Montessori is Authorized by Volunteers of America. BMS signed a 5-year contract with VOA. The contact for VOA is:

Stephanie Olsen
Volunteers of America MN
Charter School Authorizing Program
9220 Bass Lake Rd. #255
New Hope, MN 55428
solsen@voamn.org
(612) 270-1998
<https://www.voamnwi.org/authorized-charter-schools>

Bluffview Service-Learning Plan

Bluffview Montessori School All Students Participate in Service Learning 2022-23
Goal: All general education classrooms will participate (annually) in at least one (1) Service-Learning project that includes a community service activity rooted in the City of Winona. Result: Met 100% of classrooms participated
Bluffview Montessori School All Students Participate in Service Learning 2023-24
Goal: All general education classrooms will participate (annually) in at least one (1) Service-Learning project that includes a community service activity rooted in the City of Winona. Result:

Introduction

As a leading authorizer, Volunteers of America–Minnesota builds its portfolio of high-performing charter schools by only selecting proposals with a strong potential for success. It then ensures that such potential is realized through a unique system of accountability that begins even before a school opens its doors.

VOA-MN is committed to fulfilling its role as a charter school authorizer by holding its schools accountable for a range of results. The accountability system presented in this document ensures that VOA-MN will uphold its legal obligation to make sure the schools it authorizes are reaching (or making adequate progress toward) the goals and benchmarks outlined in its charter contract and Minnesota statute.

VOA-MN uses a standard charter contract with unique school-specific terms that capture different approaches to achieving student success. The individuality of each school will be preserved in the “Academic Program Description” addendum to the charter contract.

Volunteers of America of Minnesota Accountability Plan

According to Minnesota Statute 124E.01, subd.1, The primary purpose of charter schools is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement. VOA-MN holds the schools it authorizes accountable in five major areas: academic performance, fiscal management, board governance, management and operations, and legal compliance. Each area may have multiple indicators of success and the charter school’s performance on each indicator will be rated as:

- ☐ Does Not Meet Standard
- ☐ Partially Meets Standard
- ☐ Meets Standard

Rating Scale: For each standard, a school earns points for contract renewal as follows:

- 0 = Does Not Meet Standard
- 1 = Partially Meets Standard
- 2 = Meets Standard

Weighting of Performance Measures used during the contract renewal process is as follows:

50% weighting: Academic Program (statutory purposes, including primary purpose)

20% weighting: Financial Sustainability

30% weighting: Organization

- 15% on governance
- 15% on management & compliance

Combining Data Over the Contract Term

Annual school performance results will be combined each successive year of the contract term wherever possible so that fluctuation due to small group size will be minimized and overall performance is accurately reflected.

Contract Renewal Eligibility

VOA-MN schools must achieve at least a Satisfactory Rating (70% of points possible) in the Performance Framework overall and meet the majority of standards in each performance area (Academic, Financial, Organizational Performance) to be eligible for a three-year contract renewal and at least an Exemplary Rating (80% of points possible) in the Performance Framework overall and meet the majority of standards in each performance area to be eligible for a five-year contract renewal. All contract renewals will be for either three or five years. Fewer than three years does not provide enough information on which to make a renewal decision. If a school is performing below standard to receive a three-year renewal contract, but has agreed to the authorizer terms and conditions set forth in the School Improvement Plan to correct areas of deficiency, VOA-MN may agree to extend a school’s contract (not to exceed five

years) to provide additional time for a school to improve performance as an alternative to termination. If sufficient school improvement is not being made by the end of the 1st year of the extension, termination proceedings will commence.

Intervention and Corrective Action

VOA-MN schools that, prior to their year of contract renewal, fall below a Satisfactory Rating in the Performance Framework overall and/or in any performance area (Academic, Finance, Governance, Management/Operations) must enter into a School Improvement Plan that addresses the specific standards in the Performance Framework where the school performance is below Satisfactory.

Closure Plan

If the school does not meet the terms of the School Improvement Plan and attain a Satisfactory Rating by the end of the contract term, the school is a candidate for nonrenewal. If the school's contract is not renewed, the school must implement the Closure Plan as described in the school's charter contract.

Three essential questions guide our VOA-MN authorizer oversight and charter school accountability plan.

- **ACADEMIC PROGRAM PERFORMANCE** - Is the school's Learning Program a Success?
- **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY** – Does the School Exhibit Strong Financial Health?
- **SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS** - Is the organization effective and well run?

Ongoing Authorizer School Monitoring

Site Visits:

One of the most important ways VOA-MN gathers information about the schools it authorizes is through on-site visits. Site visits allow the authorizer to observe the school and engage in discussions with school management. VOA-MN conducts two different types of site visits: Formal and Informal.

- **Formal Site Visit**- Formal Site Visits are typically conducted once per year by a member of the VOA-MN Authorizing Program Leadership Team who interviews key stakeholders and conducts observations. Written feedback is provided to the Board of Directors and school leadership guided by the Site Visit Rubric. VOA-MN staff will provide formal written feedback summarizing observations. The feedback will identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement. If a more serious issue arises from a site visit, VOA-MN may implement an intervention based upon the "Range of Interventions" table.
- **Informal Site Visit**- VOA-MN may conduct informal site visits at any time to fulfill its duties as an authorizer. Reasons for informal site visits may include: investigation of a complaint, determination of readiness to open, follow up on implementation of improvement plans, or documentation of best practices. These visits are typically less formal and may be without notice.

Board Meetings:

Another important component of VOA-MN authorizer oversight is board meeting observations conducted at least twice per year and more often for schools within their first two years after initial charter approval. Authorizer VOA-MN uses the Board Meeting Observation Rubric and provides timely feedback to the school boards. VOA-MN also closely monitors the monthly board meeting minutes and financials of each authorized school and provides feedback to the school as needed.

School Published Annual Reports:

The Charter School Law (Minn. Stat. 124E.16) includes requirements for a charter school annual. Additionally, VOA-MN requires that annual reports include specific elements defined by VOA-MN annually. VOA-MN required elements include how the school is performing based on the three essential questions: Is the student learning program a success? Does the school exhibit strong financial health? Is the organization effective and well-run? The final draft be board approved and posted to the school's official website. The VOA-MN Annual Report criteria may contain the World's Best Workforce Report.

Authorizer Published School Performance Reports:

In addition to the Formal Site Visit Report that each school is provided, VOA-MN will also annually publish three VOA-MN Charter School Network Reports: Academic Performance, Board Governance, and Financial Management. The cumulative purpose of these reports is to assess the ongoing performance of VOA-MN authorized schools regarding academic success, financial sustainability, and organizational effectiveness. The combination of school performance based on the three VOA-MN Annual School Performance Reports, annual Formal Site Visit Reports, informal site visit observations, authorizer observations of board meetings, and ongoing monitoring of school reporting and compliance provides an accountable oversight mechanism for the authorizer, schools, and other organizations. This collective body of evidence will also form the basis for contract renewal decisions.

School Report Card

The data previously included on the school report card pages is now available through the Minnesota Department of Education's Data Center. The center was designed to provide parents, educators, schools, districts and citizens with easy access to test results, revenue and expenditure data, demographic information and other critical data in a centralized location. This information can be accessed at <http://rc.education.state.mn.us/>

Non-Profit Status

The [Bluffview Montessori School Annual Meeting](#) was held on May 11, 2023:

To confirm Bluffview's Non-Profit status, please visit the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State (<https://mblsportal.sos.state.mn.us/>) link below and select "Bluffview Montessori":

- [Bluffview Montessori non-profit status](#)