

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

HERSHEY MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Northeast Ohio

hershey-montessori.org

Start Date: July 2026



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& ASSOCIATES

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HMS Mission

To provide beautiful Montessori environments, where learning and work are integrated within a community experience engaging intellectual, moral and social development of children and adolescents from birth to eighteen years.

HMS Vision

Children and adolescents develop a strong sense of self, rooted in love for the environment and community, seamlessly transitioning from each stage of development through adulthood. They are equipped to thrive in changing times and prepared to contribute to community as stewards of peace and humanity.

HMS Values and Aspiration

Hershey Montessori Schools' Values and Aspiration statements can be found at:
<https://hershey-montessori.org/about/mission-vision-and-core-values/>



Overview

Hershey Montessori School in Northeast Ohio (no connection to the Pennsylvania Hershey school) has a stellar reputation throughout the Montessori world, and justifiably so. It is a unicorn in that it combines:

- An exemplary AMI Montessori program for children from 2 months through 18 years (one of only a handful of Montessori programs with high schools) on two campuses with currently approximately 250 students.
- The Adolescent Program (grades 7-12) is housed on a campus on a working farm where students fulfill many of the farm tasks including supervisory roles and much more. The Farm is integral to the program, combining academics with real-world challenges and opportunities in a project-based learning environment.
- Starting in grade 8, a residential boarding component of its student body is available, bringing global diversity to the already incredibly rich Montessori program when combined with local day students.
- Every summer, the International Montessori Training Institute (IMTI) takes place on the school's Farm campus. While separate from Hershey itself, the Institute brings Montessorians from far and wide to the campus and exposes them to what Hershey uniquely does there. <https://www.montessori-imti.org/>
- Montessorians from elsewhere regularly tour Hershey to see the magic that happens at this unique school.

Nestled among the verdant rolling hills of Northeast Ohio, the purpose-built Concord campus is home to:

- Hershey Montessori School's (HMS) YCC (Young Child Community, (walking through 36 months);
- Children's House (ages 3 – 6 years including Kindergarten);
- Lower Elementary (grades 1-3 and Upper Elementary (grades 4-6)' and;
- A parent-infant program starting as young as 2 months.

Those programs have a widespread reputation as an embodiment of excellent AMI Montessori programming. As noted above, the unique middle and upper schools and boarding program are located about a half an hour away on the farm.

"The nicest, most wonderful place I've ever worked." This was an unsolicited comment from a member of the administration and says volumes about the culture of HMS. Community, Innovative, Supportive, The Best – are just a few of the often-cited strengths of HMS.

One parent's thoughtful and comprehensive summation of what the school seeks in its next Head

The next Head of School must be both a visionary and a grounded leader. Someone who honors Montessori philosophy while boldly adapting it to meet the needs of today's children. They must lead with courage: willing to make hard decisions, challenge the status quo when necessary, and stand firmly for what is right for students. They should be fiscally responsible and strategic. Able to steward the school's resources wisely while investing in people, programs, and systems that strengthen its future. Equally important, they must be an empathetic communicator and a unifier: someone who listens deeply, rebuilds trust across silos, and fosters a culture of collaboration, transparency, and mutual respect. Accountability, consistency, and inclusion should be... values they live and model daily. Ultimately, this leader must embody the spirit of Montessori, not just in pedagogy, but in practice: observing first, adapting with intention, and always keeping the dignity of the child at the center of every decision.

After 19 years as Head, Paula Leigh-Doyle is retiring in June 2025. The school will be in the capable hands of an internal Interim Head for the 2025-2026 school year. HMS seeks an exceptional individual to lead the school as its next Head starting July 1, 2026.

Strengths of the School

Among the many strengths a new Head will find are:

- A school that is unequivocally dedicated to the values and practices and pedagogy of AMI Montessori. Everything is done with thought and intention and consciousness of the interrelatedness of the natural, academic, emotional and physical, all in service to development of the child. Hershey knows who it is!
- A warm, inclusive, caring, diverse and supportive community is almost always the first thing people cite when asked about Hershey.
- A mixture of long-tenured and newer faculty, staff and administrators, provide both program continuity and energy. The dedication and quality of faculty is exceptional.
- Many teachers remark at how they feel supported by the administration of the school.
- The physical campuses in both Concord and the Farm in Huntsburg are remarkable and ideally suited to facilitate the Montessori pedagogy and program.
- The Board of Directors is engaged and skilled and thoughtful and works in a best-practices relationship with the administration.
- The School has been blessed with many years of benevolent support from the Hershey Foundation and the Hershey Family Foundation. Multiple generations of the Hershey and Guren families continue to attend the school and serve on the Board of Directors. Indeed, the Farm campus was the long time Hershey family home.
- There is a healthy Hershey Montessori School Endowment with assets > 2 x the annual budget.
- There is an unmistakable, palpable sense of joy that radiates within and from the school's campuses. You can just "feel" it.

Opportunities and Challenges

Despite many things going exceedingly well, there is work to be done to continue to fulfill HMS' commitment to excellence, including:



- It is hard work to assure fidelity to AMI Montessori. In particular, attracting and retaining highly dedicated and skilled guides, assistants and administrators takes continuous effort.
- The school would benefit from increased enrollment across the whole school, but especially in the adolescent (grades 7-12) middle and upper schools. In addition to recruiting new students, there is an opportunity to increase retention through the key grade transition points (eg. Children's House to Elementary; Upper Elementary to middle school; and middle school to high school).
- The school has entered a phase of rightsizing and adjusting in order to have a long-term sustainable budget, work that must continue under the new Head.
- Many of the administrative staff are relatively new and still settling into their roles. The new Head will have the opportunity to adapt the administrative structure to ideally serve the evolving needs of the school.
- Some of the school's systems and procedures need to be better coordinated and updated. For example, there is a desire for more systematic, more timely and more complete communications within the school and externally.
- Not surprisingly, the two campuses feel like different schools. There is an opportunity, however, and in fact the most recent ISACS Accreditation Major Recommendations (2023) emphasize, to bring the two schools more closely together where $1 + 1 = 3$ in a strengthened overall school. Many see an opportunity for students from the Concord campus to experience more of what the Huntsburg campus has to offer.
- The school serves a growing population of neurodiverse learners. Montessori is an approach that is particularly effective with many of these students, and the school is challenged to meet the ever-increasing needs of this significant segment of the student body.
- The school has a history of wonderful, positive parental involvement and needs to reestablish that. For example, there is currently no organized parental auxiliary organization. Many seek additional ways to build camaraderie among parents.
- Not only is it necessary to grow the enrollment on the Huntsburg farm campus, but there is an interest in looking at how the resources of this 97 acre gem of a property can be utilized even more by the whole school.



- The school desires to diversify its funding sources and continue to build a widespread culture of philanthropy in the school community.
- The Boarding program is excellent but well below capacity. Residential students from overseas as well as other parts of the US enrich the experience for everyone, but HMS needs increased outreach to fill these places.
- With few examples of successful Montessori high schools, Hershey is plowing new ground to remain true to Montessori principles while preparing students for higher education and the realities of a rapidly evolving, technological world, a challenge in need of support.

Qualities and Personal Attributes

- The next head must have a depth of Montessori training and experience to lead by example and set the “tone at the top.” Continued training and engagement in the greater AMI community is valued.
- There is a need for an inspiring future vision to unite everyone with a sense of where they all going together, while continuing to emphasize how all aspects of life at HMS are integrated under the values and child development tenets of Montessori. “Vision and adaptive leadership.”
- The ability to delegate effectively while articulating high expectations and accountability.
- A background of successfully hiring and managing leaders and staff members
- A systems thinker, familiar with well-run high-performance school operations. Able to establish systems that uphold both excellence and compassion.
- The Head must be a gifted and compelling communicator in both writing and speaking, to articulate the importance of Montessori education and the vision of a successful Montessori graduate, to both internal and external audiences.
- “Collaborative backbone.” i.e. the ability to seek input and be inclusive where possible but also to be decisive when necessary. “Sociocracy” has served the school well in some respects but also has left people at times desiring that we “stop talking about it and just make a decision.”
- The new head, both by leadership and by setting the example, must reinforce the culture of HMS as a caring, compassionate atmosphere where every individual, regardless of role or position, is respected, valued and supported.
- In addition to Montessori credentials, the next head will need to have financial knowledge and experience sufficient to partner with the new Director of Accounting and Business Operations in rightsizing and otherwise adjusting the budget to achieve long-term sustainability.
- Ability to continue and improve the culture of philanthropy and assure that the school has a top-notch advancement staff. Personal experience soliciting gifts.

- A knowledge of and experience with neurodiverse learners would be highly desirable.
- Because HMS serves students from two months through age 18, the broader the experience with that full range of ages, the better.
- Must understand the role of the Board (Governance and Financial stability) vs the role of the Head of School (Operations, Strategic planning, Financial Performance) and be able to work collaboratively with an active Board.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Hershey Montessori School.

[School Website](#)

[Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[Explore Hershey Montessori's Campus](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultant in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A statement of familiarity and experience with Montessori education, including any certifications;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

Skip Kotkins

Senior Consultant

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