

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

ROCHESTER MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Rochester, Minnesota

rmschool.org

Start Date: July 2026



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

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Mission Statement

Cultivating life-long learners who forge a better world.

Overview

Surrounded by green, perched on a hill overlooking the rolling farmlands of southern Minnesota, Rochester Montessori School (RMS) sits on an exceptional property that immediately impresses first-time visitors. Its purpose-built campus, the ample outdoor spaces, the natural light in the classrooms... all support the ideal learning environment for students ranging from 18-months-old through 8th grade.

But... as exciting as the campus is, it is what goes on IN the campus that is the true magic. While neither formally AMS nor AMI, RMS takes the best of Montessori programs and “does Montessori” exceedingly well through 6th grade. The 6th grade program also introduces the International Baccalaureate® Middle Years Programme (MYP) that is the foundation of the 7th and 8th grade middle school. Students report that the transition from Montessori to IB-MYP is seamless. Success wherever the students go after RMS attests to the effectiveness of the Montessori-IBMYP continuum.

Because Rochester is home to the famous Mayo Clinic, it attracts families from all over the world. The population of RMS parents is highly educated, very international, and committed to their children’s school.

While the school budget is balanced entirely on tuition, there is the opportunity and desire to augment income by building a stronger culture of philanthropy, along with the introduction of financial aid programs. Greater enrollment in the middle school and greater socio-economic diversity in the student body are targeted areas for growth.

The prior head resigned to deal with some family issues and the school is fortunate to be led by an experienced former head as Interim HOS for the 2025-2026 school year. When the new permanent head starts July 1, 2026, there will be a solid foundation from which to spring RMS forward. While ideal candidates would be experienced in excellent Montessori programs, the position is open to any progressive educator who is both an inspiring visionary and capable manager.

Strengths of the School

RMS is a close-knit community where genuine connection defines daily life. As 8th graders say, “Everybody knows everybody” and it shows. Older students know many of the youngest children, faculty members know students beyond their own classrooms, and parents often form friendships with one another and with staff. The warmth is palpable with hallways filled with greetings and conversations. Grounded in Montessori values, this spirit of connection is among the many strengths that will welcome the new Head of School. More strengths include:



- The school is undergoing ISACS accreditation, the preparation for and self-study of which should facilitate progress on many of these opportunities. The Self-Study will be submitted Spring 2026 and the Visiting Team will be on campus in the Fall of 2026.
- The vast majority of parents describe the guides and assistants as “amazing” and the school has invested in Montessori training over the years.
- The Montessori program is so good that there has been talk that RMS could become a training site for future Montessorians, leveraging the expertise and experience of the current RMS educators.
- Although there is an opportunity to grow resources for the school’s administrative staff, this small, but mighty team is full of people who are dedicated, capable, collegial and deeply supportive of each other.
- The outdoor spaces on campus have woods, playgrounds, a chicken coop, a nature trail, and great untapped potential for even more outdoor experiential activities. Students are out of doors year round, including most winter days. While there is no dress code at RMS, each child is required to have their own snowsuit. But don’t be deterred by “Minnesota winters.” The four seasons are considered a real strength of the Rochester area.
- The school is blessed with a group of passionate parents eager to be involved with the teachers in support of the school. There is a parent association and a cadre of room parents who materially contribute to the success of the school. One administrator quipped “This place would not run without the parents.
- With a growing population of neurodiverse students, RMS has a wonderful partnership with Rochester Public Schools. Qualifying kids are picked up at RMS, taken to a nearby public school where they can get specialized learning support beyond what RMS may be able to provide, all at no cost to the school or families.
- Because Mayo Clinic is a world class leader in medicine, it attracts families from all over the world. The multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious backgrounds are a hallmark strength of RMS, enriching the growth of the children and the environment for staff and parents alike.
- The school enjoys a history of balanced budgets; there is a small amount of debt at very favorable interest rates so that there is no hurry to pay it off. Solid finances provide a strong launch pad for “building the future of RMS.”
- Finally, the school is guided by a wise and committed Board of Trustees who are active and present and know what a best-practices relationship with the Head and administration looks like.



Opportunities and Challenges

Among the opportunities for the new Head to have impact as well as personal and professional satisfaction are:

- **Build Brand Awareness for Academic Excellence.** While the school was established 57 years ago, it still remains widely unknown to Rochester residents. The school needs a comprehensive marketing plan that builds a credible, valuable brand for RMS in the community as the best independent school in town. Specifically, they are looking to solidify and grow numbers in the Middle School Program, which is incredibly rigorous, but largely not understood by the community.
- **Promote Clarity and Unity.** Because we have a mix of AMI and AMS trained Montessori guides, and IB curriculum starting in 6th grade, the staff needs clarity and alignment on how to deliver one “true Montessori” education across all rooms, and clarity in how Montessori and IB work together. Parents could also benefit from more clearly understanding the excellence that the Rochester Montessori School curriculum delivers. Different program levels and classrooms have also operated in silos. There’s a need to bring everyone together under one collaborative culture, including curriculum consistency across same level rooms.
- **Staff Support and Development.** The staff is looking for a leader that supports them - whether it be with individual classroom needs, or dealing with difficult parent situations, and a leader who also challenges them to achieve excellence, via commitment to regular observations and development plans.
- **Structure and Systems.** The school prides itself in being able to balance the operational budget on tuition alone. This has largely come at the sacrifice to staffing appropriately. The staff has always run thin, and previous heads have struggled to get it all done. The next head has an immense opportunity to assess staffing levels and develop a budget that supports an appropriately sized team for the school. Building a strong team, developing efficient systems, empowering staff, and delegating jobs will be key to the next head’s success.
- **Fundraising.** RMS needs a strong culture of philanthropy. RMS has never devoted resources to instilling the value and need for financial contributions from current, extended and alumni families. Additional contributed income can support many aspects of the school including the desire to increase socio-economic diversity within the school population.



Qualities and Personal Attributes

The next Head of School at RMS must be both a visionary leader and a capable manager. While he/she must be approachable and well connected with the staff and families, they should also have the ability to step in and out of the details seamlessly, based on the current priorities. RMS has a small, yet very capable team of administrators and staff, eager for a leader that can set direction and provide the support to empower each of them individually to perform at their highest level.

- **Warm, authentic people-person** who is eager to know and connect with everyone within and external to the RMS community, and to become an integral part of and builder of the school's already amazingly close-knit community.
- **Strategic & Decisive** leader, who is able to operate at the right level, delegate, and, if necessary, say "no" so they can stay true to what they do best. Excels at delivering feedback, and comfortable dealing with conflict.
- **Clear and charismatic communicator** with a genuine demeanor, knowledge and passion for delivering independent/Montessori/IB education. Even if the candidate is not trained in IB or Montessori, a commitment to learning about both, and to clearly communicate their value. A marketing mindset.
- **Vision and Execution.** Ability to not only set the vision, but also to "get it done:" from communicating a clear plan, to delegating tasks and securing the appropriate resources.

Learn More

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

[School Website](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[Montessori and IB](#)

[About Rochester, Minnesota](#)



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 with Montessori/IB education, and experience communicating the benefits thereof to diverse audiences;
- 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

skip.kotkins@carneysandoe.com

The full-time equivalent salary range for this position \$140,000 - \$200,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors that include years of experience, education level, and expertise.