
WELCOME
BENVENUTI
BIENVENIDOS
BONJOUR LES AMIS!



To Our Prospective Parents and Community Friends

For over 40 years, “Spring” BMA has protected and encouraged children, and at the same time challenged and stretched them to the limits of their intellect and imaginations. Children arrive at Spring as 2 ½ year olds, barely out of diapers, and leave after kindergarten at the age of 6: confident, assured and well-educated, possessing qualities of mind and character which serve them well as they continue to learn and achieve.

Within the walls of our school children become literate and numerate. They develop pride in their own accomplishments and respect for the talents of their classmates. This is, above all, where children learn how it feels to do one’s best work, and to have the effort as well as the product recognized and celebrated.

Finally, we believe that children learn best when they learn with others who are both similar and different from themselves. It is with great pride, then, that we note that both our student population and our staff are diverse racially, socio-economically and geographically.

In an environment of peace, mutual respect and cooperation, under the guidance of a trained teacher, children work unobstructed by adult interference, at their own individual pace and to their own satisfaction, with attractive, natural materials of their own choosing, once the teacher has introduced them to their use.

We have a very special program here at Spring BMA, one that offers much love, care and enjoyment in learning. Come see us soon. We look forward to meeting you and your child.



“We must prepare for a new world, for the new man.... To arrive at real peace, it is not enough to make laws, construct treaties and offer prayers; we need education as an armament for peace, which will help develop ethical behavior based on moral and spiritual values that will form a union among nations intent upon building one country: EARTH.”

--- Maria Montessori

HISTORY OF SBMA

The Spring Bilingual Montessori Academy was established in 1967 by Mrs. Anna Franchi Neri. Mrs. Neri was a direct student of Dr. Maria Montessori, founder of the international Montessori educational system. As an accomplished foreign language educator as well as a respected practitioner of the Montessori Method, Mrs. Neri envisioned Spring Academy as a logical and natural extension of Dr. Montessori’s teaching philosophy – a place where children of diverse social and cultural origins can develop the cognitive and communication skills equally essential to the learning process and to creating a global peaceful society.

Just in time for the start of the 2003-04 school year, Spring Academy re-located from its home of many years off Seminary Road in Silver Spring, to its current location in Kensington. After 37 years at the helm, Mrs. Neri retired.

For over 40 years, Spring Bilingual Montessori Academy has innovated and refined the concept of integrating a Montessori education with the acquisition of proficiency in a second language, at the preschool level. At Spring Academy, our goal is to ensure a future of peace and understanding, in which we speak one another’s language and embrace each other’s ways.

TWELVE POINTS OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

1. It is *based on universal principles of child development* derived from years of patient observation, and has proven itself universally effective. For nearly a century Dr. Montessori's methods have met with complete success with children the world around, of every background, skin tone, habitat, nationality, social status, economic circumstance and culture.
2. It has revealed the small *child as a lover of work*, intellectual work, spontaneously chosen and carried out with profound joy.
3. It is *based on the child's profound inner need to learn by doing*. At each stage in the child's mental growth, corresponding occupations are provided by means of which he develops his faculties.
4. It assists the child's *ability to make independent, intelligent choices* from a broad array of developmentally appropriate activities, and in so doing allows her to develop tremendous self-esteem, responsibility and academic achievement.
5. *Free choice within established limits leads the way to acquire self-discipline and responsibility*. In the measure that the child acts responsibly, greater liberties are awarded, which enable further growth. Freedom and discipline are two sides of the same coin.
6. *As Montessori eliminates the need for coercion by means of rewards and punishments*, it achieves a higher form of discipline than traditional educational methods. This is an active inner discipline that originates within the child and is not imposed from without. Without competition or coercion, the child is freed from "performance anxiety" and develops a *strong self-confidence as a firm foundation of mental health*.
7. The Montessori Method is *based on a profound respect for the child's work of self-construction*. This removes from him the overwhelming influence of the adult and leaves him room to grow independently according to his own needs.
8. *Teachers guide the children according to their individual needs* with individual attention. The Montessori Directress strives for the optimum "point of contact" when presenting a lesson, introducing new skills to each child as the moment of need arises.
9. *Each child works at his or her own pace*, for as long and as often with a material as inner needs dictate. This fosters the development of profound feelings of contentment and self-satisfaction.
10. *Opportunities for success are maximized*. Each newly acquired skill prepares directly or indirectly for something down the road, and every complex skill is broken down into smaller points of difficulty presented separately in advance, so that learning becomes easy and pleasurable. Each stone in the mental edifice is "well and truly laid" before the next is added.
11. The Montessori Method eliminates the competitive spirit and its train of woeful results. At every turn it presents endless opportunities among the children for mutual help, which is joyfully given and gratefully received. *Montessori children are helpful, cooperative, generous, considerate, tolerant and compassionate people who become true citizens of the world*.
12. Finally, the *Montessori Method develops the whole personality* of the child, not merely the intellectual faculties but also the powers of deliberation, initiative, independent choice and problem-solving abilities. By living as a free member of a real social community, the child learns fundamental social qualities which form the basis of good citizenship.

VIVE LA DIFFERENCE !

Like other Montessori institutions, Spring Academy seeks to create a learning environment in which the student is encouraged to explore his own innate sense of curiosity and eagerness to gain knowledge. The program is also carefully designed to meet the individual needs of each child.

The “difference” between the Spring Academy environment and that of other Montessori institutions lies in the parallel instruction of foreign language to all facets of the learning process.

It has been shown in countless educational research studies that the child is most sensitive and receptive to a second language during the period from birth to age six. During these crucial developmental years the child tends to learn most effectively not through conventional teaching means, but by *absorbing* information through activity within the environment to which he is exposed. This is a natural process, embraced by the child with a tremendous amount of enthusiasm.

The goal of the teacher in this process is to prepare a structured environment in which the child has access to information and activities which promote positive learning. At Spring Academy, learning the language of another culture is as natural as are the stimuli used to write, to count, to associate names with places and animals, and to develop sensory awareness and practical life skills.

The advantages of this added understanding go beyond the simple acquisition of a second vocabulary. Spring Academy believes that to know something of the spoken and written language of another group of people is akin to being acquainted with them. Language enables us to penetrate into another culture’s philosophy, folklore, literature and music.

Through this understanding, we can begin to bridge the unnatural barriers separating the world today. We wish to give our children the inspiration to create a better world tomorrow.

BILINGUAL OFFERINGS

French-English

Italian-English

Spanish-English

The Spring Academy program has been proven effective over the years both for native English-speaking children and for those with another mother tongue. The success of our program is grounded in Maria Montessori's discovery of the very young child's special sensitivity to language, which enables her to absorb a new language effortlessly and naturally in the first 6 years of life.

Our classroom environments are bilingual in the same way as a bilingual home where the two parents each speak to their child only in their own tongue. The Montessori Directress addresses the children in English, which is the language of instruction in the Montessori classroom. Meanwhile, her Assistant speaks exclusively the foreign language of the class. The children also receive direct instruction from the foreign language teacher daily through a period of immersion in the secondary language.

In this unique environment, the English-speaking child learns a second language while reinforcing comprehension of English vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. The child who speaks French, Italian or Spanish at home will be taught in English while receiving reinforcement in his native tongue. He will also learn to express himself in English through writing and will learn to read in this "new" language. Even children whose home environment has yet a different language will be able to learn both new languages easily and comfortably within a relatively short time.

ABOUT SPRING ACADEMY AND THE MONTESSORI METHOD OF EDUCATION

For nearly a century Montessori schools around the world have been offering unparalleled opportunities for education and self-development to children from infancy through high school. SPRING BILINGUAL MONTESSORI ACADEMY (Spring Academy, or SBMA), has been serving the metropolitan Washington, DC community since 1967. It is incorporated as a non-profit organization and is governed by a Board of Directors.

SPRING ACADEMY's unique program introduces and reinforces a second language to children 3 to 6 years in a classroom environment which implements the educational philosophy and teaching methods developed by Maria Montessori (1870-1952), who opened the first Children's House in Rome in 1907.

Dr. Montessori pioneered most of what we take for granted today concerning early childhood: the crucial importance of the first 6 years of life, how a child learns by absorbing knowledge through the senses, the young child's inner need for purposeful activity, the importance of movement and independence to learning, the joy of self-discovery, even child-size furniture and learning environments.

Montessori made the revolutionary discovery that *children learn through their senses and through movement*, absorbing sensory impressions to build their intelligence. And further, during the first six years of life, the most crucial to learning, children pass through several Sensitive Periods, when they have a unique talent to develop certain specific capabilities. Montessori education takes advantage of these Sensitive Periods by presenting concepts at the age the child is most receptive to them, and through their most receptive mode, the senses.

We see education as a preparation for life that does not begin or end with the acquisition of academic skills. SBMA offers an orderly, nurturing and understanding prepared environment, which fosters your child's physical, emotional, social and spiritual growth, as well as the intellectual and academic. The school's role is to nurture the child's natural love for learning, work and order through self-discipline, mastering positive attitudes toward learning and achieving ever-increasing levels of independence.

Participation in a mixed-age community provides many role models for learning, and develops respect for the feelings, ideas and different abilities and cultures of others. Lessons are given individually or in small groups, so the needs of each child are met when they arise. While Montessori children often may read, write and work arithmetic problems before 5 years of age, the emphasis is not on academic achievement but on development of each child's unique potential. The school's role is to nurture the child's natural love for learning, work and order through self-discipline, mastering positive attitudes toward learning and achieving ever-increasing levels of independence.

REPETITION OF THE EXERCISES develops concentration and inner calm. The self-correcting materials allow the children to discover and correct their own errors. Free to talk and move around, they develop not only an astounding physical grace and control of movement but a true social community. A MIXED-AGE CLASSROOM offers role models, mentors and peers of all ages. All children experience the opportunity to learn from, and pass on their knowledge to, each of the others. The atmosphere is non-competitive; mutual help and cooperation arise spontaneously.

In an environment of peace, mutual respect and cooperation, under the guidance of a trained teacher, children work unobstructed by adult interference, at their own individual pace and to their own satisfaction, with attractive, natural materials of their own choosing, once the teacher has introduced them to their use.

Spring's programs have proven to be successful with both English-speaking children and those with another mother tongue. The student mix is multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-cultural.

Our program is not designed for any one particular type of child. Spring BMA strives to maintain an inclusive environment, populated by a broad range of children from the very bright, including those with normal intelligence, to those with slower minds but no serious physical handicaps. All children are evaluated individually during the admissions process to ensure that our environment is a good match for the needs of both child and family.

Spring Academy is fully accredited by the Maryland State Department of Education and by the Office of Child Care, and is associated with the American Montessori Society (AMS).

SBMA admits students of any race, religion, ethnic or national origin and does not discriminate against any family on the basis of these factors, marital status or sexual orientation. We seek and welcome cultural and racial diversity to our school community as a colorful expression of the intricate Web of Life.

THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

The Primary program at Spring Academy is designed to provide the young child with the tools, motivation and guidance necessary to stimulate his natural desire to learn. In addition to the aforementioned language component, primary students become skilled in a full range of cognitive and creative subject areas. These include *reading, writing, verbal skills development, mathematics, science, history, geography, music and art.*

In addition, a number of *Practical Life* exercises are incorporated into the child's learning environment. These functions, which can be as seemingly ordinary as polishing a table or serving refreshments to the class, are in actuality integral parts of the Montessori curriculum. They teach the child responsibility in caring for the things in his environment, and foster the development of social graces.

Sensorial activities are also vital parts of the program, enabling the student to refine perceptions of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste by such functions as distinguishing between colors and forming sounds to describe a familiar object. The Sensorial exercises also serve as natural introductions to reading, writing and math.

Movement is essential to a young child's learning. Through a variety of physical activities both indoors and out, Spring students improve motor coordination and posture, and develop an astonishing grace and control of movement.

Weather permitting, every day after lunch the children play outdoors at our neighboring Town park, which is also the site of many a nature walk at different seasons of the year. Under the watchful eye of the teachers and staff, children are encouraged to participate in games and informal lessons which help them to share, to relate with others, and to explore the world of nature all around them.

Of course, one of the most effective ways of encouraging learning is to engage the spirit as well as the intellect and persuade through beauty. At Spring Academy, that realization becomes an ideal in classroom design. In every aspect of the school environment, the emphasis is on creating a beautiful, attractive, stimulating yet peaceful atmosphere in which the child can explore at her own rate of development, both individually and with others, many avenues to self-discovery.

CALENDAR

The regular school year at Spring Academy is held five days a week, beginning in early September and running through mid-June. We offer Half-Day (Primary), Lunch Extension, or Full-Day options. Before and After-School programs are also offered for children with working parents or who otherwise need to be in school for an extended period.

The Summer Program blends educational and recreational offerings with opportunities for incoming 2 ½ -year-olds to orient to the school experience.

Spring Academy follows its own calendar, and follows Montgomery County Public School system regarding closures for inclement weather conditions. Please see the following Programs section of this brochure and the attached school calendar for more detailed information.

ACADEMIC YEAR PROGRAMS

For Children 2 ½ to 6

Although doors open at 7:30 for Early Birds before-school care, the school day begins at 8:30 am. The following programs are offered:

Half-Day	8:30 - 11:45	with Lunch Extension 8:30 – 12:30
Full Day + Nap	8:30 – 3:00	Nap for 2 ½ - 3 ½
Full Day	8:30 – 3:00	For 4 and 5 years and up, additional afternoon class time. (child must be 4 by Sept. 1 st .)

The Bilingual Montessori Program is designed to develop language skills in both the home language and the second language. We foster cultural-heritage aspects, confidence and legitimate pride in both cultures.

The program consists of a daily 45 minutes total immersion in the foreign language chosen, plus conversation reinforcement during 40 minutes of lunchtime directed by the foreign language teacher. The rest of the morning experience is bilingual. The child speaks to the Montessori Teacher in English and to the Assistant in the foreign language.

In the afternoon hours, for children who go back to working time the program is a total immersion in English, while the 2 ½ - 3 ½ are enjoying nap or quiet time.

Children enrolled in the Half-Day program to leave at 11:45 may join the lunchtime on a drop-in basis, to extend the Foreign Language conversation period and enjoy lunch with friends, for a small additional charge.

EXTRA-CARE PROGRAM

Early Birds 7:30 – 8:30

After-School Care 3- 6 pm

Students requiring supervision before and/or after normal school hours may be enrolled in Extra-Care. Morning care is provided for “Early Birds” between the hours of 7:30 and 8:30 am. After-school Extra-Care extends from 3 to 6:00 pm, according to need. Activities during these periods are under the supervision of regular faculty members, and include unstructured play, crafts, stories, drawing, music and outdoor fun.

Additionally, for the convenience of our families we also offer a Vacation Care program from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm during the spring break, with a minimum of 10 children registered.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Spring Academy operates two summer programs, subject to sufficient enrollment. One is an orientation program for 2 ½ -year-olds new to Montessori who will be joining our classes in the Fall, and the other a more extensive program of arts, play and Montessori enrichment activities for children of 2 ½ -6 years with prior Montessori experience.

SUMMER AT SPRING

From June into August SBMA offers our children the comfort of a familiar environment and well-loved friends and teachers, alongside the allure of new activities and a less structured environment than they have during the school year.

“Summer at Spring” is in all aspects based on Montessori philosophy, although with less emphasis on “Montessori” work than during the school year. Nor is it the traditional “summer camp” where the basic aim is outdoor physical activity. Ours is a balanced and pleasant play-and-working summertime program, a relaxing good time in an environment where children feel at home.

Summer at Spring strikes a balance between structured intellectual and educational time, playtime, and physical exercise indoors and out. The children’s daily experience may include water play, structured games, music and dance, arts and crafts, nature study, stories and various other group recreational programs.

The student/faculty ratio is lower than during the school year. Foreign language is presented more informally, with an emphasis on oral expression, and overall the pace is relaxed and unhurried. It’s a very special combination of fun and learning, with 101 things to do.

SUMMER ORIENTATION

This half-day, 2-week program is designed to give our new, incoming 2 ½’s an introduction to the Montessori environment, with a basic orientation to essential classroom routines and behavioral expectations. The group is small and intimate (5-10) so peer friendships are easily established before the start of school. Some of the elementary exercises in the Practical Life, Sensorial, Language and self-expression areas of the curriculum are presented. There is no foreign language component during this orientation session.

TUITION AND PAYMENT PLANS

Our tuition structure is highly competitive. Fees and payment policies are detailed on a separate sheet enclosed with this booklet.

Enrollment entails a tuition contract agreement for the entire school year. School tuition payments may be made annually, by semester (semi-annual) or monthly, according to the plan you choose in advance. Payment plans normally run from August through May. Late admissions will be prorated.

Those parents choosing semi-annual or monthly billing options are notified that early withdrawal of the child does not relieve parents of financial obligations for the remaining payments.

Payment is due within ten (10) days after the first business day of the month. A late fee of **3%** finance charge will be assessed to all accounts 30 days past due. This charge will accrue monthly until **all** payments are made.

The tuition fee does not include lunch or snack.

DISCOUNTS

A 10% sibling discount will apply to tuition and Extra-Care fees of the second and succeeding sibling enrolled simultaneously at Spring. There are no discounts on the Tuition Deposit. A Tuition Referral Credit is given to current parents when a new child whom they have referred enrolls: \$100 for a full-year enrollment or \$50 for a second-semester enrollment.

No discount in school tuition will be made for vacation or illness.

Only in case of diplomatic or military orders or of job transfer may the payments be adjusted, and then only at the discretion of the Director in accordance with school policy, upon thirty (30) days written notice.

In the case of midyear enrollments, tuition is prorated.

ADMISSIONS

Observing a Class. First-hand observation of the Montessori environment is the best way to apprehend what Montessori is about and how it works. For many parents this is the first step towards enrollment. Orientation tours are given weekly or by appointment. An in-depth classroom observation is highly recommended as a follow up. Parents will get the most from their observation if they are unaccompanied by their own children. Please call the office to arrange a visit. If a classroom observation is not possible, a tour of the facility can be arranged at your convenience, outside of normal school hours.

Applications will be accepted throughout the year upon payment of the application fee, whenever a vacancy exists.

Age at Admissions. Children are eligible for enrollment the September following their 2 ½ birthday, provided they are reliably toilet trained and emotionally ready for separation and group experience. The latest age for admission is 4 years 2 months, or later with previous Montessori experience. Certain exceptions may be made outside those parameters at the discretion of the Educational Director, based upon her professional judgment and observations during the child assessment visit.

The Admissions Process. It is the Academy's belief that the enrollment decision is a matter of mutual assessment and understanding between family and school. Your child's successful experience at Spring is grounded in her family's firm support of her efforts, which flows from your substantial basic accord with Montessori values. To this end we want to provide every opportunity for you to make your enrollment decision a fully informed one.

Following our receipt of your application, the Admissions Office will schedule a *child assessment visit* with the Educational Director and a *parent interview*. In the pre-admission interview, families are provided with further information about the school and its programs, its mission and policies and the Montessori system in general. Questions are addressed in a candid, straightforward manner.

There is no set deadline for enrollment in Spring Academy. Open registration for new students begins March 1, following the priority registration period for current families. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year and may be accepted in midyear for the current year as long as space exists in the language class of your preference. Class size is limited, and admission is granted on a first-come, first-serve basis, considering the need to balance ages within each class.

The ideal age for enrollment is 2 ½ to 3- ½ years of age. As Montessori is a 3-year cycle, the maximum benefit to your child is derived from 3 full years' attendance at the school, through their "kindergarten" year and moving on to first grade. Spring BMA is fully licensed and accredited as a non-public kindergarten by MSDE.

It is advisable to call our office as soon as possible for an appointment to take an orientation tour or to observe a class. Your telephone or email inquiries are always welcome.

A FEW NECESSITIES TO START OFF RIGHT

Parents receive a Parent Handbook upon enrollment. New material is distributed at the beginning of the school year, or when requested. This publication outlines school policies and contains valuable and informative material on Montessori philosophy and methods.

All children are required to have current health records and medical emergency cards on file.

All children keep an extra set of clothing in their cubby “just in case”. Montessori philosophy incorporates many fundamental ideas of child comfort while in school. School is a home away from home; in our “casa del bambino” the children wear house slippers indoors. The slippers allow for a cleaner and quieter environment within the classroom, while giving the children many opportunities to learn to put on their shoes by themselves.

SPRING BMA AND FAMILIES

Spring Academy believes that parents and school constitute a vital partnership in nurturing your child's development. Parents are encouraged to play an active role, to become engaged in your child's education and the cultural life of the school. In every respect, Spring Academy is a "community" – a blend of students, their families, the Academy administration and faculty.

PARENT VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Opportunities abound for parental involvement in special projects. We have a number of *ad hoc* and standing committees, composed of parent volunteers and staff, to assist teachers and administration with various projects throughout the year. These committees meet according to the needs of the school throughout the year, and include:

- Advisory
- Hospitality
- Publications
- Grants
- Fundraising
- Events
- Outreach/Marketing
- Building & Grounds
- Parent Coordinating

You are not required to join a committee to help out. Although SBMA has no definite service requirement, interested families will find several opportunities throughout the year to serve the school, from participating in our fundraisers, to materials repair or construction, sharing a skill or story with the class, technical support (e.g. computer and internet), photocopying, grant writing,, etc. New suggestions, ideas and skills are always welcome.

FUNDRAISING

Tuitions cover only a portion of the Academy's operating costs. Fundraising is an important auxiliary source of revenue. We hold two or three project campaigns and one or two events during the year. Participation is encouraged and greatly appreciated, yet optional.

OBSERVATION AND CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice yearly as scheduled, and by request of either parent or teacher, to discuss overall development as well as progress in the program. Parents receive a written report at the end of the school year, in conjunction with the final conference.

Parents are encouraged to bring concerns and questions to the attention of the classroom Directress or the Educational Director at any time.

Parents observe in the classroom at least once each semester and especially preceding the conferences. Interested prospective parents and community members are welcome as well. Please call the office to arrange a time to observe.

PENS (PARENT EDUCATION NIGHTS)

Parent classes are held at scheduled times throughout the year, to address issues relating to the children's experience at SBMA. Topics range from the theoretical to the practical, including:

- Montessori theory and teaching methods
- Foreign Language Curriculum
- Child Development
- Discipline
- Home Environment
- Movement Songs and Games
- Discovery Sessions with the materials, including explanations of the curriculum areas

SBMA FACULTY AND STAFF

FOUNDER

Mrs. Anna Franchi Neri, who founded our school in 1967, is a veteran teacher and director of both public and private schools in the US, Italy and Argentina. She received the Montessori International Diploma in Austria in 1951, under the direction of Dr. Maria Montessori and Mario Montessori. Mrs. Neri completed her undergraduate studies in Italy with a degree in Italian Language Education. In Argentina she continued to study child psychology and directed one of the few certified training programs for professional Montessori educators in the Southern Hemisphere.

Mrs. Neri is the author of the book, *Understanding Each Other*, a statement of her philosophies in education as a unifying instrument of world peace.

THE SPRING ACADEMY FACULTY AND STAFF

Our highly skilled and qualified staff come from diverse national and cultural backgrounds, united by their commitment to excellence in shaping the Academy's unique learning environment. All are qualified and certified by the Maryland Department of Education for the level of supervision and instruction they provide. The school is an Equal Opportunity Employer and makes a concerted effort to maintain a homogeneous, international staff character in its hiring decisions.

All teachers possess a baccalaureate degree. *Montessori Directresses* also hold the graduate-level international Primary Diploma of the Association Montessori Internationale.

Foreign Language Instructors are native-speaking, degreed educators, carefully selected for their teaching talents, effectiveness with young children and compatibility with the Montessori environment.

Teaching Assistants are bilingual, with native fluency in their language. They have been trained at the Academy in many aspects of Montessori and bilingual education and child supervision.

The *Extra-Care staff* is composed of our regular staff, whether teachers, assistants or office administrative personnel, so they facilitate a seamless transition for the children between their classroom and the child care environment.