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### **New Elementary Montessori Magnet Program in Washtenaw County**

**WHITMORE LAKE, MI - Sept. 24, 2021** - Parents of elementary students can add a tuition-free, multi-age Montessori magnet program to their list of school options thanks to a new program offered by Whitmore Lake Public Schools (WLPS).

The program, available as a school of choice option, is currently open to kindergarten through third-grade students looking for a unique approach to public education. Families from Washtenaw and Livingston Counties and surrounding communities are enrolling in the program that is located at the WLPS 8845 Main St. campus between Ann Arbor and Brighton off U.S. 23.

"We are a small district where our students are not numbers, they are individuals. In our traditional classrooms, we meet children where they are and help them grow accordingly—we call it exceptional, personalized education. The multi-age Montessori approach is child-centered too, so when looking to expand options for the families in our region, offering this program just made sense," said Tom DeKeyser, Superintendent for WLPS.

Luckily, they had Montessori experts nearby from Go Like the Wind Montessori School (GLTW) ready and willing to help get the program up and running, including Director of Education Karen Barney who is also helping oversee the magnet program.

Students follow the same academic calendar and daily schedule as all Whitmore Lake Elementary students, starting school at 8:50 a.m. and ending at 3:35 p.m. Kindergarten-aged students in this program learn in classrooms with children ages 3-6. This range, common in Montessori, lets kindergarteners develop compassion, courtesy and leadership skills as they work alongside their younger peers, Barney said. Likewise, the first through third graders learn together, giving students flexibility to dig into skills they are passionate about or take time to master skills that are more challenging for them, she added.

WLPS plans on expanding the program to include fourth grade for the 2022/2023 school year.

In Montessori education students move through core curriculum (language arts, math and geometry) along with science, cultural studies, geography at their own pace. Specials like music, gym, art and Spanish are integrated as well. Students get uninterrupted blocks of time to choose an activity and explore, experiment, and invent as long as they find that subject and

activity interesting. Then they clean up, return their learning materials to the assigned spot and choose another lesson to work on. The teacher is there to move through the class, observe, offer support and one-on-one instruction.

“We let the students make their own choices within our core curriculum. The Montessori method, as child-driven learning, helps students regardless of their preferred learning style to master motivation, attention and responsibility.” Barney said. “It is wonderful to have programs that can best meet the needs of all our learners. Indeed, the education of our children is the path to a better tomorrow,” she added.

Go Like the Wind Montessori School, also located in Whitmore Lake, has been providing tuition-based Montessori education for children six weeks through sixth grade for over thirty years. Founding their school in Ann Arbor, they moved to Whitmore Lake in 2018.

“We are fortunate to have the input of Go Like the Wind’s talented staff who have been working in Montessori environments for years. GLTW’s staff, supported by WLPS staff’s expertise and knowledge, creates a dynamic new learning program, and we hope families take advantage of it,” DeKeyser shared.

Following WLPS’ COVID-19 mitigation strategies, all students and staff are required to wear masks and follow the Washtenaw County Health Department orders. WLPS was the only Washtenaw County school open five days a week for the 2020/2021 school year. They are confident they can provide students with safe in-person learning.

To learn more about this program and find out how to enroll, visit [wlps.net/montessori-magnet-program/](http://wlps.net/montessori-magnet-program/). Want to come tour the school or set up a “visit for a day” where students can attend a half or full day to make sure it is a good fit? Email [info@wlps.net](mailto:info@wlps.net).

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