

**Report of the  
North Central Evaluation  
Ramalynn Montessori Academy**

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## Overview of School

Ramalynn Montessori Academy is a private pre-school, elementary and middle school in Bloomington, Minnesota, with an enrollment of 127 students, ages 3-14. The school day runs from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM, with extended day and summer options available.

Ramalynn, founded in 1985, and accredited in 1991, has become an established school with full enrollment.

Ramalynn Academy uses the traditional Montessori curriculum, materials and methods. Students are tested in the spring using the Stanford Achievement Test. The students work independently and in small groups; the instruction is individualized and self-paced in a continuous progress program. The class day begins with 45 minutes of group instruction, then two hours of individual and small group work time. A one hour lunch and recess time is provided. The last 90 minutes of the day are spent in group instruction in art, music and foreign languages.

The classrooms are large and comfortable, arranged for individual and small group learning. There is a variety of multi-sensory materials for students to use. The students are quiet and actively engaged with their assignments. Computers are available for writing, reading and research projects.

The Ramalynn staff consists of 16 full-time teachers, all with a B.A. in Education, at a minimum, and Montessori-certified, and 4 part-time staff. Lynn Ramalingam is the full-time administrator. The curriculum consists of language arts, social studies, science, math, art, music, Chinese and Spanish.

Ramalynn Academy has a mission statement and five-year plan for curriculum enhancement in conjunction with the North Central Accreditation. Their five-year plan includes five goals.

The five goals are:

1. To prepare students for the multi-ethnic, global community they will inherit and to be able to be model citizens of the future society.
2. To expand the science curriculum by obtaining new texts that includes more experiments and hands-on activities. They will also improve in-class technology to create a learning environment where information can easily be attained and viewed.
3. To enable students, as they move into a larger world, with a foundation in language in order to participate as informed and effective citizens in a democratic society. They will be able to meet a variety of challenges and create new opportunities.
4. To build on the math curriculum by creating opportunities for their students to compete against other students of the same ability in math competitions and take

national exams that challenge the students' math skills and teach them to work as a team. They also plan to add new texts that will help prepare the students for schooling beyond Ramalynn Academy.

5. To integrate the five areas of art within our culturally diverse world, bringing a historical perspective to appreciate and understand our world's growth.

### **Overall Learner Outcomes - Exemplary**

In reviewing the last NCA report and comparing it and our observations, we believe Ramalynn Academy has stayed true to the Montessori philosophy. From 1996 to the present (2003), great improvements have been made, providing even more enriching academic opportunities.

1. The learning environment is quiet, disciplined, child driven and child centered.
2. Instruction is individualized and students move at their ability and pace.
3. Learners know the routine and the tasks and expectations for themselves through a daily and weekly "contract".
4. Learners were on task and self-directed.
5. Small group learning was collaborative and meaningful. Students supported one another in mature ways. We did not see one student doing all the work for their group, as often happens. There was very "equitable" learning taking place.
6. There is an expectation for high academic achievement by all students.
7. The curriculum was comprehensive and hands-on.
8. We observed students using higher-order thinking skills continuously.
9. Students are taught to listen and be respectful of one another's ideas.
10. Students were respectful and confident in dealing with adult guests.

### **Physical Structure & Organization of the School Day**

9:00 AM - Group Instruction

9:45 AM – Noon - Individual Work Time

Noon - 1:00 PM - Lunch and Recess

1:00 – 3:30 PM - Group Instruction in art, music, choir, foreign languages

1. The organizational structure gives the students a chance to really work on and understand their subjects. The two hour block of time from 9:45 AM to noon is used very productively by students and teachers to learn skills in math, language arts, social studies and science. During this time students can explore and try harder tasks.
2. Ramalynn Academy is located in central Bloomington and easily accessible with adequate parking for staff and visitors. It is adjacent to outdoor playing fields and within walking distance of the local library.
3. There is a comfortable indoor physical environment with choices of desks, floor, low platforms and pillows for students to use while studying individually.

4. Field trips are integrated into the curriculum and students visit the local nearby library weekly.
5. There are low class size to teacher ratios. In the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level, the ratio is 4 teachers to 43 students. In the upper level, 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the ratio is 3 teachers to 31 students. The remaining staff work in the pre-K – Kindergarten program, also with low teacher/student ratios.
6. The school communicates with parents through a newsletter and other materials and uses parent volunteers in many capacities.
7. Ramalynn Academy also offers after-school and summer programs which supplement the regular curriculum.

## Teacher Environment

The teaching staff has grown since 1996 from 3 full-time staff to 16 full-time staff. All have a B.A. in Education, minimally. Most are experienced and highly educated. The staff brings a multitude of diverse, cultural backgrounds to the school.

1. The teachers are committed to the Montessori method of teaching and enthusiastically impart that to students.
2. The staff is comfortable in multi-grade and multiple subject integration. This staff must be and is flexible.
3. The staff exudes confidence and calmness.
4. Teachers are aware of the educational needs and progress of individual students and guide them to appropriate tasks.
5. Teachers are facilitators of learning not lecturers.
6. Teachers assure that students are treated fairly and equitably in regard to individual group tasks and during discussions.

The teaching staff under the leadership of one of the Academy's new teachers is already beginning to fulfill goals 3 and 4. Students will be competing in the LEGO Robotics Competition this year and other math and science competitions are being planned. We also observed a "Socratic" seminar conducted by another new staff member. It was exciting to listen to the students discuss the topic of revenge vs. forgiveness.

## Limitations & Recommendations

Continue to develop a scope and sequence in each of the curriculum areas.

**Recommendation:** The Academy has developed language arts goals and objectives for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Make sure the goals align with the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade curriculum. If the Academy has not done so, adopt a scope and sequence for the other subject areas as well, especially since they plan on acquiring new science and math curriculums.

All of the limitations and recommendations from the last NCA visit, in 1996, have been fulfilled. The school should continue involving parents and staff in decision-making appropriate to the task or issue.

**Conclusion:** Ramalynn Montessori Academy is educating students in an exemplary fashion. The staff are imparting knowledge in a professional, student centered environment.

Students are gaining knowledge, are self-directed and motivated to learn. They are confident and respectful people that are growing in emotional and academic maturity.

It was a pleasure watching teachers and students working and learning in such a productive and happy teaching environment.