

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Troy Berryman

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Lincoln Montessori Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 310 South 3rd Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Norfolk NE 68702-0139  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Madison County

Telephone (402) 644-2550

Fax

Web site/URL

<https://www.norfolkpublicschools.org/schools/lincoln-montessori-elementary/>

E-mail troyberryman@npsne.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Jami Jo Thompson

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail jamijothompson@npsne.org

District Name Norfolk Public Schools Tel. (402) 644-2500

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Sandy Wolfe

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 10 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	14	11	25
1	12	13	25
2	10	11	21
3	9	9	18
4	7	13	20
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	52	57	109

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 14 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 85 % White
  - 1 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: <1%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	0
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0%  
0 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22%  
Total number students who qualify: 24

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %  
6 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	5
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	98%	97%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

The mission of Norfolk Public Schools is to prepare all students to pursue their goals for the future.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

We are a public Montessori school; families interested in the Montessori method of education must apply for admission to Kindergarten before March 31 of each year. On April 1, we randomly draw 25 family names. These 25 students are admitted into Kindergarten for the next school year. Family names continue to be drawn and these families are placed on a waiting list in the order in which they were drawn. Once enrolled at Lincoln Montessori, students are expected to stay through their fourth grade year, whereupon they will transfer to the Norfolk Middle School with the district's other rising fifth graders.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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In 1992, the Norfolk (NE) Public School District opened a public Montessori Kindergarten class at Victory Elementary School, located at 1001 South Victory Road. Quickly, this program grew into a K-3 Montessori school. In 2002, when Norfolk Public Schools closed its “country schools”, our Montessori program added a 4th grade section and moved into Lincoln Elementary School at 301 South 3rd Street, where we still are today. We are currently known as Lincoln Montessori Elementary. This helps inform and educate our community that we are a public school and are located in the “Lincoln building”, but we offer a different way of delivering instruction.

The Norfolk Public Montessori School provides an alternative to parents for their children’s public school education. It is a program that is part of the Norfolk Public School. Therefore, there are no additional fees or tuition charges. The curriculum meets district and state standards and is the same as the other six elementary schools in Norfolk. The difference lies primarily in the manner of presentation, the timing of material presentation, and in the materials themselves.

Dr. Maria Montessori, who created the Montessori method of education, believed that no human being is educated by another person. She thought that a truly educated individual continues to learn from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt the goal of education should be for the child to cultivate his or her own natural desire to learn.

The Montessori method of education is a balance of structure and freedom that gives children a strong basis for developing the learning skills in their formative years. The teacher in a Montessori classroom facilitates learning and does not strive to be the focal point of the environment. Rather, the teacher observes the child’s needs and directs the child toward the appropriate materials through which learning will be achieved.

Children in a Montessori classroom are exposed to academic areas early on, through manipulative materials and are provided with real-life, concrete experiences. The child’s academic progress is closely observed and monitored by the teacher. The Montessori classroom is designed to meet the needs of the child with specialized manipulative materials which are sequenced and which isolate difficulties in order to lead the child from one level to the next. Typical classroom environments are divided into specific learning areas with the main emphasis on language, mathematics, and cultural studies.

Children are free to choose from the materials that have been introduced to them by the teacher. They may work with materials repeatedly to have the opportunity to discover the underlying concepts and to attain mastery of the skills contained. Although there are both large and small group activities throughout the session, the child’s academic instruction is most often individually presented. Each child is carefully observed to assure respect for his or her own level of ability and progress. One learner is not compared or paced with another.

Lincoln Montessori has five classrooms: Kindergarten, two 1st and 2nd grade multi-age classrooms, 3rd grade and 4th grade with a total of 109 students in 2018-19. Our student body is slowly becoming more diverse. Today, only 22% of our students receive free or reduced meals, but that is up from just 11% in 2015-16. At Montessori, 85% of our current students are white, but that is down from 92% in 2015-16. Currently 14% of our students are Hispanic, up from 4% three years ago.

There are five full-time, certified Montessori teachers on staff. Our staff also includes a .5 physical education teacher, a .5 music teacher, as well as part-time art and computer technology teachers, similar to the other elementary schools in the district. We also have shared (about .4 FTE) principal, two part-time counselors (which add to .4 FTE), three paraprofessionals, and a full-time secretary.

Special Education services are limited at this time. Limited resource and ELL instruction is available depending on the needs of the student. Speech/Language services are available and are provided by a shared Speech/Language pathologist.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

The Montessori method of instruction follows a phonetic approach when introducing reading and language. We begin with an emphasis on sounds. The sounds are broken up into three groups and once a group of sounds is learned, we begin blending those sounds into words. As students practice blending with that specific group of sounds, they begin learning new groups of sounds. We practice this until all sounds are introduced and the students can blend those sounds into words. We do this with a variety of hands-on materials. In conjunction with learning to blend and read words, we also introduce high frequency/sight words and letter names. We introduce handwriting and practice pre-writing and language skills (opposites, rhyming, word families, patterning etc.) through concrete materials. From there, we follow a stair-stepping scope and sequence, which would include skills like sentence structure, writing, digraphs, blends, alphabetical order, compound words, and comprehension. Reading and language skills are introduced according to the level of the child and the development of each student. Freedom of movement and choice are encouraged. All areas begin with concrete materials and move to the abstract.

Our teachers use formative assessments every day to make sure our students are on track to reach our district's target standards. If, after introducing and practicing a skill, a teacher finds that a student is consistently struggling with a concept, then that concept will be retaught. We also use the DIBELS assessment twice a year and again use the results to validate what we see in classrooms and also to provide us with evidence of a struggling reader. We administer the NSCAS tests to our third and fourth graders and give the MAP tests to students in second, third, and fourth grades. We use the results of this data to ensure that our students are on track to succeed.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

The Montessori math curriculum is centered on concrete educational materials that show what is taking place in a mathematical process. Math is an abstract concept, but if these concepts are explained with concrete materials that the child can manipulate, they are able to learn at a faster pace. This enables them to be prepared for advanced math concepts at a later age. Learning comes more easily when students can use a hands-on approach and the Montessori math materials proceed through several levels of abstraction. Children learn through the use of the materials, working with partners, and teaching other children. Over time, the children are able to move into abstract understanding of all math concepts. We want our students to visualize patterns, develop number sense, think critically and logically, be able to work cooperatively and teach other students as well. All K-4 students use the Montessori math materials every day. All of the Montessori math is divided into categories, such as problem solving, fractions, place value, and geometry. Our math curriculum meets or exceeds all state standards for each grade level and all state standard concepts are taught at each grade level.

Our 3rd and 4th grade students take the MAP and NSCAS assessments and our 2nd grade students take the MAP assessment. All of our students utilize the computer programs IXL and Xtra Math for additional practice in all math area standards.

#### **1c. Science:**

Science instruction in the Lincoln Montessori program follows the Montessori of America scope and sequence. We provide students with many opportunities to focus on the process and issues of science including the study of life, the laws and structure of the universe, and the work of scientists. The standards are carefully addressed by teaching students to learn to ask questions, follow a systematic process of observation, collect and analyze data, and conduct controlled experiments. The problem-based learning and differentiated instructional process are used to encourage a sense of wonder of the universe, the simple beauty of the physical laws, and the miracle of life. The school-wide lessons extend from sorting objects in

the youngest child, all the way to engaging in activities such as debates and STEM science fairs for upper elementary students. Topics of study in the Montessori program range from how the world began to the basic principles of astronomy, botany, chemistry, physics, and zoology. Each lesson/material may contain multiple elements, which are tagged to the appropriate cycles within the multi-age classrooms.

The circular approach used follows the Montessori of America program which our school has remained true to, but also adapts to include any district standards that are in addition to the Montessori curriculum. Assessment data from the 5th grade drives the overall K-4 program to allow students to easily transition to the Middle School level, which begins in 5th grade in Norfolk. The science curriculum aims to prepare students to achieve all Montessori science tenants as well as the required State of Nebraska standards.

#### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

In a Montessori classroom, social studies is referred to as the “cultural area.” Students learn about the history and traditions of different cultures as they study the world. Children are naturally curious about their surroundings. The Montessori cultural areas spark a child’s interest at all elementary age levels. One important area of the cultural study is geography. Students understand that there is a purpose and an order to our universe. This involves how and why things happen in a specific order. Through the core Montessori curriculum, the scope and sequence starts with the big picture and moves to the smaller parts. The big picture is our solar system and the study of the universe and planets. This is usually done through unit studies and themed activities. This year, for example, our school hosted a science assembly that involved an indoor planetarium.

As the students enter grades 1-3, they begin studying the seven continents. Through the continent study, students learn about the people, land, animals, and famous landmarks. At Montessori, we constantly are using teacher-created formative assessments to make sure our students are on track to reach our target standards. Our students complete pin maps and puzzle maps, which leads to further curiosity. Advanced students are given the opportunity to label states, countries, and capital cities, too. Students have the opportunity to further their learning through research of states, countries, and continents.

The Montessori classrooms use Scholastic News as a resource for learning about current events. Teachers sometimes use the short assessments from the Scholastic News to check for understanding.

Additionally, grades K-4 can explore social studies on our computerized program called IXL. This program gives teachers even more data about how well students are learning the material. The fourth grade studies Nebraska by using books, technology, and inviting speakers into the classroom. A fourth grade study trip to Lincoln includes a visit to the State Capitol and Morrill Hall. Through these cultural studies, students gain a deeper understanding of our world.

#### **1e. For secondary schools:**

#### **1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:**

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

#### **MUSIC**

Students study music at Montessori to gain an appreciation and love for music. The focus of the curriculum is to create a positive learning environment where students get basic training of the language of music. Music can support enhance what students are learning in math, science, language, social studies, and many other subjects.

The music program goes beyond the words of the songs and includes opportunities to explore movement,

rhythm, tone, and pitch, as well as valuable listening experiences. Students can explore their own musical interests and experience the emotional and transformative power of hearing, creating, and performing music. Students participate in vocal music two to three times per week for 30 minutes and are invited to explore orchestra as fourth graders.

## ART

Students receive instruction in art at least twice per week. Creation is at the heart of art instruction at the elementary level. Students learn to work with various tools, processes, and media. They learn to coordinate their hands and minds in exploration of the visual world. In art class, the child's natural inquisitiveness is nurtured. Students develop skills of observation as they learn to examine the objects and events of their lives through art. They are able to experiment enthusiastically with the art materials and investigate the ideas presented to them through visual arts instruction.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The goal of Physical Education is to teach students to become life-long participants of exercise and sports/leisure activities. The focus of the curriculum includes the basic fundamentals of movement, with some moderate sport skills in the higher grades. Students participate in Physical Education two to three times per week for a 30-minute period.

We use a variety of health-related physical fitness assessments through a program called Fitnessgram. It assesses cardiovascular fitness with the PACER Run, muscular endurance with the Curl Up / Sit Up test, and flexibility with the Sit and Reach Test. We test every fall and spring to show growth over the school year. The goal of FitnessGram is have each student in the "healthy fitness zone". If you are in the healthy fitness zone, you are considered to have overall good health.

We also send home a couple family fitness challenges throughout the year. Our November challenge was entitled "Stuffed with Fitness"; our January one was called "Fit with Family" and the last one in March was Dr. Seuss-themed. These challenges encourage families to be active together.

The Red Ribbon Run promotes a drug free and healthy lifestyle and is sponsored by WJAG Radio every fall. The Elks Free Throw Contest is held every winter and we have a district-wide 4th grade track meet every spring. We also host an all-school Field Day every other year; on years in which we don't have Field Day, we host an all-school talent show.

## LIBRARY/MEDIA

The library/media program of our school supports students' acquisition of skills and knowledge by focusing on the following skills: reading, information literacy, digital citizenship, and keyboarding. The primary emphasis of our library program is to encourage a love of reading. We do this with weekly presentations to grades kindergarten through fourth grade to promote award-winning and popular books that exemplify quality illustrations and literature, promote an understanding of other cultures and areas of the world, and encourage positive behaviors and acceptance of others. We also provide students with an understanding of how to use reference materials and skills to read a variety of print mediums and formats. Students are given ample opportunity and encouragement to check out multiple books each week.

The media classes continue our goal of promoting information literacy by providing students with weekly online classes to practice using online reference materials, to gain an understanding of website credibility, and to practice locating online information sources and extracting pertinent information. During these classes, students also learn the skills for using technology, as well as how to use technology responsibly and safely.

## GUIDANCE

Lincoln Montessori students in grades one through four participate in whole class guidance lessons one day every other week for 45 minutes. Kindergarten guidance lessons are held each week for 30 minutes. We have a schoolwide behavior plan that reinforces positive behavior and teach monthly Boys Town social skills. The guidance curriculum follows the ASCA (American School Counseling Association) Standards for Elementary School Counseling and assists students in developing mindsets and behaviors that make

them successful learners and give them social skills as well as skills for self-management. Each K-2 lesson includes discussion, exploration, activities, stories, projects, and games to make each character concept fun and memorable. Grade three uses *The Energy Bus for Kids* book and journal activities by Jon Gordon, *Paws in Jobland* career exploration software, and books by Julia Cook to teach social and academic skills. Grade four utilizes a resilience education curriculum called “Why Try.” It is a program that provides simple, hands-on solutions to increase academic success. It teaches social and emotional principles to youth in a way they can understand and remember through the use of analogies. Individual students receive counseling services as needed through referrals from classroom teachers and parents, as well as self-referrals. When necessary, referrals to outside agencies are made and collaboration with those agencies takes place. School counselors also coordinate Student Assistance Team (SAT) meetings as needed. The SAT is a school team, which includes the parent and, when appropriate, the student, in a positive, collaborative, problem solving, intervention process to help improve the student's school life.

### **3. Special Populations:**

At Montessori, the focus is always on the learner, so meeting a student’s individual needs is second-nature to us. Maria Montessori once said, “No child can be free unless he is independent.” She wholeheartedly believed that the student should be left in charge of his or her own learning. Here, we can do that. We have little large-group instruction, compared to traditional elementary schools. We teach skills and techniques to students and then let them discover how best to use them. Our teachers observe and follow the child, providing assistance along the way. Students are given specific practice to complete and after checking with their teacher to ensure competence, they are allowed to complete the classroom activities that they enjoy the most.

When students do struggle, parents or teachers can gather as a SAT (Student Assistance Team). The team includes the parents, teacher, counselor, and principal. It also sometimes includes the student as well. During the SAT meeting, the team makes suggestions and brainstorms ideas to help make the student more successful.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The culture at Lincoln Montessori can be felt immediately upon entering the building. Students are greeted at the door by staff and student leaders. Hallways are filled with colorful artwork, motivational sayings, kindness posters and character building displays. The mornings begin school wide with a morning meeting in the gym that includes the Pledge of Allegiance, school creed, and a patriotic song. In addition, students are recognized for academic and social accomplishments during this time.

At Lincoln Montessori it is our mission to prepare all students to pursue their goals for the future. We take great pride in providing an inviting atmosphere for our students, families, and staff. The presence of a peaceful environment is one of the many factors that support social and academic growth at our school. By clearly communicating high expectations and having a culture of kindness, cooperation and trust has been established. Lincoln Montessori has adopted an open door policy among classes. Students are often found visiting and helping in other classrooms. Buddy Time, where students of various ages work together, is a favorite time for the children.

Teachers feel valued and supported because of the relationships that have been developed while teaching together. Teachers value each other's ideas and want to support all children at Lincoln Montessori. We pride ourselves on minimal staff turnover over the last twenty-five years, which has resulted in a family-like atmosphere. Teacher relationships are strong and are developed further outside of the school day and building. Our Parent Advisory Board (PAB) supports our staff in a number of ways, including providing "Classroom Cash" to purchase items for classrooms, celebrating teacher appreciation week for the entire month of April, and providing a duty-free lunch for them in May.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

We strive to engage families and our community in our students' education. We want parents to be actively involved to ensure student success. Teachers and staff communicate constantly with families; examples include parent/teacher conferences, phone calls, emails, face to face communication, Class DOJO and Remind apps, and a monthly newsletter. Parents are encouraged to volunteer if possible and many eat lunch with their child/children at some time during the school year.

Teachers at Lincoln Montessori encourage an open line of communication with families. All parents are invited to participate in our school-wide communication page. On this page, student successes and class insights via pictures and messages are shared. We have received a great deal of positive feedback and involvement from parents. In addition, parents are invited to eat lunch with their child and are given opportunities to volunteer in the classroom and at school wide events, including field trips and various PAB events. Our school secretary sends weekly emails to families about school events and student celebrations.

Our PAB consists of parents of our current students. This group organizes/sponsors many events and community outreach programs throughout the school year. Some events include our beginning of the year Open House, Father/Daughter and Mother/Son Dances, Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, our School Carnival, Bingo/Reading Nights, Teacher Appreciation Week, and fundraisers and monetary donations to each classroom every year. Our PAB also helps with community outreach events, such as our Mercy Meals food-packing project and our Community Service Day.

Our student body also completes community service projects. Students participate in a yearly food drive and actually deliver the food to the Norfolk Food Pantry. We collect coins during Presidents' Day each year and donate the money to various community projects. Our #TeamBeKind group raked leaves in the fall for the elderly who live in our school neighborhood. We have also done fundraisers for "Jump Rope for Heart" to support the American Heart Association and some students participate in the "Red Ribbon Run" which promotes making healthy lifestyle choices.

Our school has a business partnership with Lou's Thrifty Way, a family-owned grocery store in Norfolk. The owner visits our school once a month and meets with students who have demonstrated desirable character traits throughout the month. He also gives them coupons to use in the grocery store and hangs their picture when they come to redeem the coupon. Our students help the store by decorating paper grocery bags during special holidays that are then given out to the customers in the store. We also do artwork to hang in the store for customers to see.

To promote and educate patrons about our school, we offer a Kindergarten Informational Night to community families who are considering enrollment in our program. We also host the annual STEM Science Day for all 3rd grade students in the Norfolk Public School system. The students get to experience a number of STEM projects and activities during the school day and then our school also hosts students and families from other grade levels during an evening presentation.

We feel engaging our parents and our community is critical to each of our students' success. We encourage our families to participate in all that is offered at our school.

### **3. Professional Development:**

The Montessori Approach to Professional Development involves three primary areas. Our staff takes part in district-wide professional development days several times throughout the year and have opportunities to grow professionally in areas such as classroom management, technology, curriculum, assessment, and leadership. The ideas gathered are brought back to the Montessori staff and shared. Many ideas are used to help improve the needs of our teachers, students, and community. We value this time as it helps us keep current and well informed so that we are making the best decisions possible regarding our students and the Montessori curriculum. Often new ideas in technology, behavior practices, or new leadership ideas are implemented or improved.

Lincoln Montessori certified staff also participates in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), consisting of both district-wide grade level meetings and Montessori school certified staff meetings. The district-wide PLC meetings help us to ensure the Montessori program is meeting district and state standards and recommendations, while the Montessori school PLC meetings allow us to build on our Montessori principles and methods and keep current with any new ideas or any area needing attention. We are able to ensure we are meeting the needs of all our students by meeting regularly with these two groups. The Montessori staff PLCs provide necessary time needed to meet and work on things which require the leadership of the part-time principal. Due to the strong PLC time provided by the district, we feel we are able to constantly improve our program and improve the needs of all our students. The time we are given is critical to our development of curriculum needs because we study data and develop learning plans with a strong sense of commitment.

Thirdly, the Montessori staff participates in many areas of developing their technology skills by attending special conferences such as NETA (the Nebraska Educational Technology Association), Google Summits, NNSTI (Northeast Nebraska Summer Tech Institute), in-house trainings, and webinars. These various trainings have provided more tools for our teachers' tool belts and have helped provide students with a variety of ways to learn things in new and different ways. With the Montessori individualized approach to learning, technology has been used to enhance ways to learn and present new material as well as give the students new avenues to prepare, learn, and present information.

In addition to these areas of focus, the certified staff has been able to take advantage of personal visits to several different area Montessori schools to gain new ideas and share with Montessori teachers outside of our district. This is always a most valuable learning tool when teachers can experience Montessori classrooms and share ideas. Many of these are implemented both in the classrooms and at administrative levels such as new materials to explore, teaching strategies, ways of reorganizing, room configurations, and classroom management.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Lincoln Montessori Elementary has always been a school of academic success. The Montessori method of instruction is without a doubt the biggest factor in our success. But we also have a very widespread circle of leaders and influencers who help drive our school forward.

One of the reasons that this circle is so wide is due to the fact that the principal is only on campus about 35% of the school week. His position is shared with another elementary school in Norfolk. Because of this, our teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals and school secretary are tasked with having to make more leadership decisions than many other staffs are asked to make.

Our teachers have spent extra time building relationships with their students and families. They are eager to provide help and suggestions at our SAT (Student Assistance Team) meetings and at school events such as our Montessori Kindergarten Information Night, which is aimed to help parents learn more about the Montessori school and help them decide if the Montessori method would work best for their child.

We have two counselors--but they only work at Montessori one day a week each. However, they do seek out students who are struggling and engage them one-on-one or in small groups. They coordinate our SAT team meetings, organized our student presentation to the Board of Education and have even started "Team BeKind", which is a way for students to become leaders in our building and further Peace Education throughout the building.

Lastly, our school secretary is the backbone of our team-first leadership approach. She notes student absences, parent concerns, and deftly answers questions about what events are coming up at school. She is an incredibly valuable resource both for our school staff and for our Parent Advisory Board.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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It is the Montessori Method of instruction that makes us unique and is the most instrumental component to our school's success. We follow the same standards as other Nebraska elementary schools. We have the same priority standards and learning targets as the other schools within the Norfolk Public Schools. However, our delivery of instruction is what sets us apart.

Our delivery of instruction is set up to teach the whole child and then observe him or her as the student practices and learns the concepts. We start with the concrete and move to the abstract, when those fundamentals have been learned. Maria Montessori often said, "Never help a child at a task in which he feels he will succeed." By observing students at work, teachers can see which students have understood the concept quickly and which ones have struggled. The teacher can then re-teach the information to the student or continue to observe to gauge the student's determination level and frustration level. The teacher may ask herself, "Does this student need further instruction? Or does he simply need more time to think about the concept?" This allows our instruction to be more individualized--students who grasp the ideas quickly can delve into those concepts more deeply or move on to another activity that they enjoy. Students who struggle with the lesson receive immediate feedback from the teacher and are given opportunities to self-correct.