



Morgan Stewart, board member and wife of teacher Andrew Stewart, checks out a PBS app with students Morgan and Austin Gardea, 6 and 4 respectively, during an open house at the Everett Montessori Academy on Saturday, July 8, 2023, in downtown Everett, Washington. (Ryan Berry / The Herald)

# As one Montessori program ends, parents launch new school in Everett

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Parents didn't want their kids' tailor-made education to stop. "We looked at each other and said, 'Well, I guess we're starting a school.'"

By Sydney Jackson

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EVERETT — When a Montessori school in

Everett announced its sixth through 12th grade program was ending, parents were shocked. Most of their children had attended Montessori Schools of Snohomish County since pre-K, and intended to stay through graduation.

Parents of nine students came together to discuss their options. Most Montessori schools end at fifth grade, and the ones that don't are at least an hour from Everett and twice the former program's \$17,100 tuition cost. The announcement came in February, and other private schools were already sifting through applications — the Montessori students would be low on the list. Parents realized they had two choices: move to another school, or start their own.

“We looked at each other and said, ‘Well, I guess we’re starting a school,’” parent Chloe Taylor said.

In less than a month, the parents decided to open [Everett Montessori Academy](#). Taylor left her public school job teaching American Sign Language and math to become one of two teachers at the new school. The parents also recruited Andrew Stewart, who taught at the previous Montessori school for 11 years. Stewart teaches many subjects, including English, history and art.





Chloe Taylor, one of two teachers at Everett Montessori Academy, jokes around with a pair of students during an open house on Saturday, July 8, 2023, in downtown Everett, Washington. (Ryan Berry / The Herald)

Keely McFadden's son was enrolled at the previous school for 16 years. Many parents see benefits of the Montessori Method but then have to move their children to a private or public school where, McFadden said, teachers don't cater to how they learn best.

"A lot of times in public school, it's very compartmentalized," McFadden, said. "In Montessori, it is a community."

The Montessori Method, developed by Italian physician Maria Montessori in the early 1900s, is an intimate approach to learning. It promotes autonomy with hands-on activities and daily lessons that are tailored to each child. Montessori schools often provide a one-room learning environment where kids of different ages can interact with each other and engage with curriculum at their own pace.

Some of the world's richest people — Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg — attended Montessori schools, as well as celebrities like Sean "Diddy" Combs, Stephen Curry and Julia Child. Like other private schools, Montessori schools tend to serve more affluent populations due to the cost. The new school's tuition is set at \$17,100, in line with the other school's sixth through 12th grade program.



“The more students who enroll, the lower the cost,” McFadden said.



A parent walks past the white board at the Everett Montessori Academy during an open house on Saturday, July 8, 2023, in downtown Everett, Washington. (Ryan Berry / The Herald)

In 2018, Bezos invested \$2 billion in [Bezos Academy](#), a Montessori preschool network that offers tuition-free schooling across Washington. Many Bezos Academy learning centers have opened this year, including one at [Everett Station](#).

Stewart said the method allows him to focus on his students’ individual knowledge and success rather than their grades.

“With the Montessori Method, you don’t have a one-size-fits-all education,” Stewart said. “If there’s something that a student should know and learn, then there are as many ways to teach that topic or idea as you can come up with.”

Julian Richard and Milo Hunton, two of Stewart’s former students, visit him when they can. Stewart has left a lasting impact on them.

“He was the best teacher I’ve ever had,” said Hunton, a 16-year-old Running Start student at Everett Community College.

Richard, 18, and Hunton both started at the Montessori school when they were 3 years old. K.



“Going from a private school to public school was definitely a culture shock,” Richard said. “The real care for the students to succeed is just not matched.”

Stewart said he’s teaching at the new school so he can continue to see his students learn and grow.

Parents, including McFadden and Mara Morris, created a school board. They got a business license and approval from the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. They recruited volunteers and fundraised.

“It’s been a learning process for all of us,” Morris said. “To be a part of this is wonderful, knowing that we can give back to our children, and provide options for the community.”



Teacher Andrew Stewart, right, speaks with visitors during an open house at the Everett Montessori Academy on Saturday, July 8, 2023, in downtown Everett, Washington. (Ryan Berry / The Herald)

The academy — not affiliated with any religious organization — is located inside Central Lutheran Church at 2702 Rockefeller Ave. They plan to expand to a new, larger site in the future.

So far, 13 students have enrolled. There are 25 slots, the parents’ preferred ratio for a classroom with two teachers.

Chris Riddle said he will send his son Nikolas, 13, to the academy because Nikolas benefits from the intimate learning environment.

“You’re not going to find these student-teacher ratios anywhere,” Riddle said.

Morris said she wants the academy to get to a point where they can offer scholarships. They are in the process of attaining nonprofit status to be able to accept donations.

“I want equal opportunity,” Morris said. “If this is a better fit for your student, let’s find a way. Let’s get them in here.”

Everett Montessori Academy is set to open this fall.

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### Gallery





Bookshelves are packed to the brim at the Everett Montessori Academy on Saturday, July 8, 2023, in downtown Everett, Washington. (Ryan Berry / The Herald)



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