

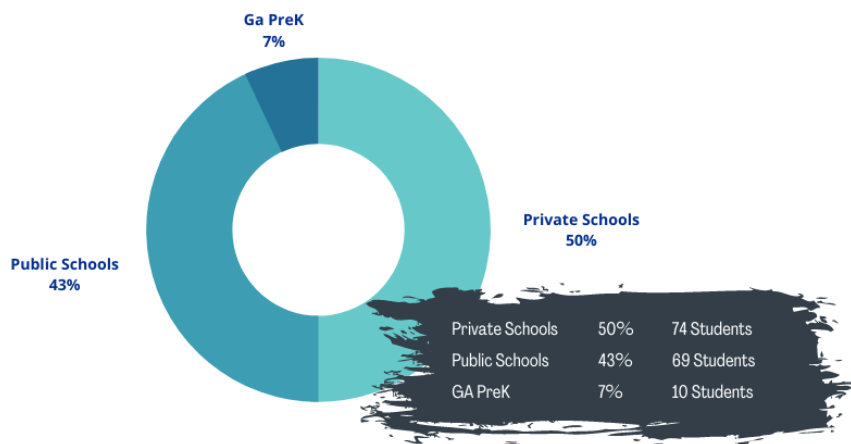
The Suzuki School

End of Year Letter

2021-2022

MATRICULATING STUDENTS

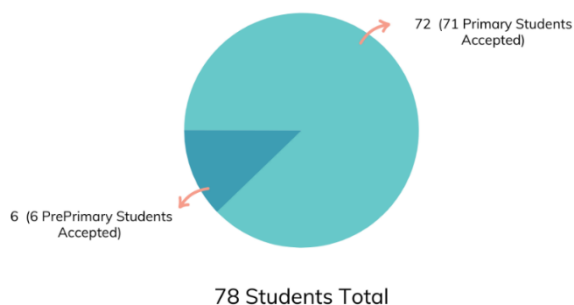
It is hard to believe that over the next two months we will say our goodbyes to nearly 150 students as they graduate. Most of our students are graduating to kindergarten or first grade, a few are transitioning to PreK programs, while others will be joining their older siblings at local schools. Each year about 50% to 60% of the children leaving enroll in private schools, and this year it is exactly half the students!



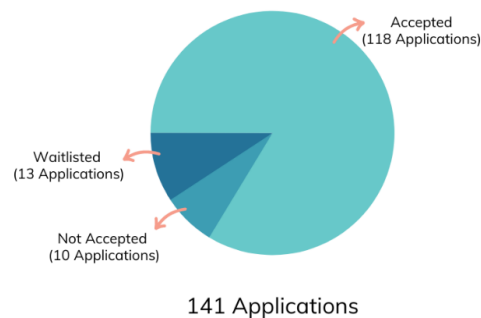
PRIVATE SCHOOLS

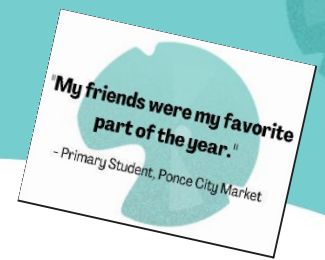
This year, our students once again showed that they are superstars! Their hard work and love of learning - with the support, encouragement, and dedication from our faculty and staff - reflects their success through high acceptance rates to Atlanta area private schools. A total of 78 students applied out to private schools this year, with 141 total applications.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS APPLYING TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS



NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS





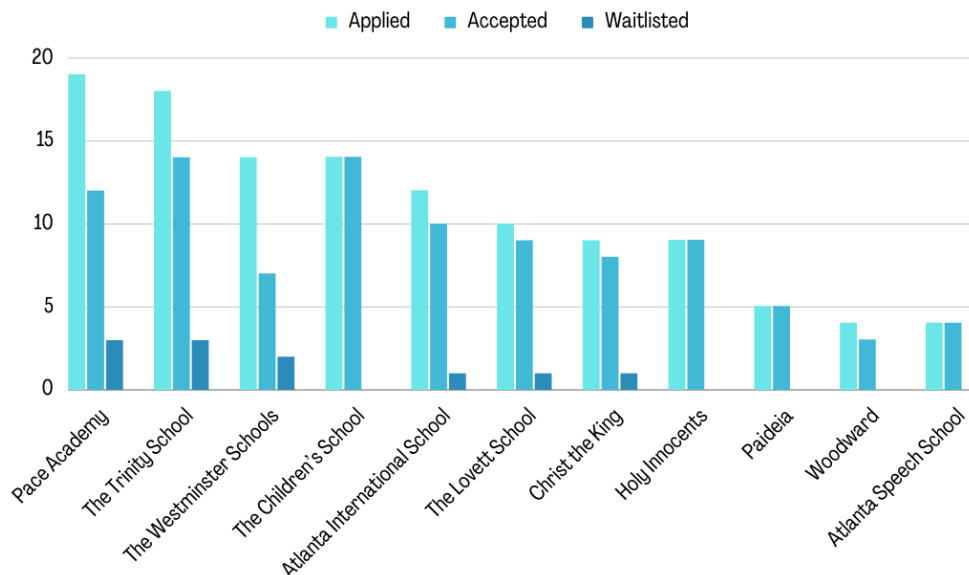
Of the 78 students applying, 77 were accepted to at least one school of their choice. It is important that when parents apply their student(s) to private schools, that they make selections that align with their student's learning style in terms of curriculum and philosophy. Over the years, we have consistently heard from local Private Schools that Suzuki students excel in self-sufficiency, foundational skills in language and math and that they are natural leaders in their classrooms.



From our experience, the most common reasons children are not accepted into at least one program are: 1) the child has a summer birthday, 2) parents only applied to one highly competitive school 3), the school was not a good fit for the child, or 4) the child had recently joined the Suzuki School. This year the acceptance rate is 99%, which is in line with the last several years (95%, 2021).

Each year, our students apply out to highly competitive and excellent schools. We closely monitor whether applications are accepted and/or waitlisted, and whether children were accepted into schools which were a good fit for them. Based on the information provided by our parents, the acceptance statistics at schools was excellent. **This year the acceptance rate is 99%**, which is in line with the last several years (95% in 2021). These statistics are truly remarkable when you consider that Private Schools have become increasingly competitive each year -several informed us that the number of applications for the 2022-2023 school year increased by as much as 40%.

ACCEPTANCES



PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As the area public schools have become a more compelling choices for families, we have seen more families select these schools rather than relocating or applying to private schools. This year, 64 of our students are leaving to attend excellent public-school programs around the city. Many of our students will enter the Spanish Dual Language Immersion programs in Buckhead and we know that all our students will excel in their neighborhood schools.



Parents - as your child starts at your new public school, please don't forget to send us a note on how they are doing! We do not get much feedback from public schools so any feedback on where they are excelling or need more support is very helpful in enhancing our program going forward!

By the end of the school year, you will be able to find our "Will I Have a Friend?" Letter both in the Friday blast and on the Parent Portal.



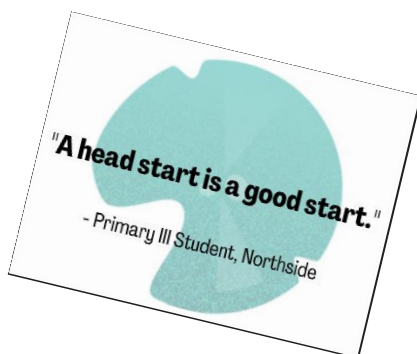
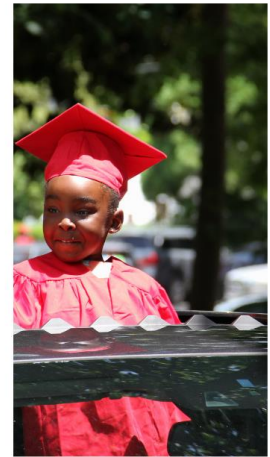


GRADUATION CEREMONIES

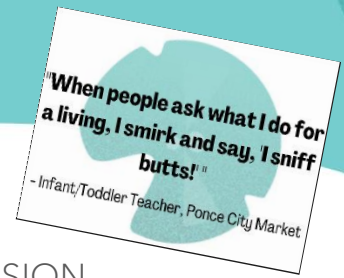
We hope that you enjoyed our Drive-Thru Graduation Ceremonies this year! Before COVID19, our graduation ceremonies were in person and could be stressful for students. We recognize that parents love to celebrate this "rite of passage" with their children and families, and we were excited to continue this tradition again on May 20th. We are confident that these children are leaving us as independent, lifelong learners, and that they are prepared for the next step in their academic journey!

CONGRATULATIONS

*Class of
2022*



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MONTESSORI AND DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

One of our most pressing concerns during COVID19 is that we did not lose the quality and consistency of our educational program. At a macro level, this has been a major challenge in the early learning industry due to elevated levels of staff attrition, workforce shortages, school and/or classroom closures, and distractions that take away from academic programming.

During the last year The Suzuki School has experienced some of these challenges - in particular, higher than normal attrition (primarily with new employees), challenges identifying qualified candidates who are also vaccinated, and managing through classroom closures due to COVID exposures. We have appreciated the parents' support in some of our hard decisions that inconvenienced them (such as shorter operating hours and continuing drop offs outside) because these accommodations helped in staff retention and coverage. Despite the "macro level challenges" we have also been truly blessed with a highly dedicated group of professional teachers. These Montessori teachers and veteran Associate Teachers have stayed committed in body and mind to providing an authentic Montessori education for the students during this pandemic.



I am so grateful to our cadre of amazing professional teachers! In a "normal year" teaching young children takes dedication, perseverance, and a whole lot of patience. When you add the stress of COVID19, it can lead to teacher burnout. Despite this, our teachers have not just shown up each day - but they have been present in excellence and a commitment to each of their students. Thank you, teachers, for all that you do and your commitment to the children.

- Paula Charles, President

Early education schools (and Montessori schools in particular) do not have many objective measures, such as standardized tests, to measure student outcomes. The two objective measures we have are Private School Acceptances, and an assessment tool administered in the Primary classrooms called the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS). Our Private School acceptance and MEFS outcomes have been excellent and indicate that our focus on academic programming has been effective. Our teachers report that the children continue to excel despite the pandemic!





MEFS is a tool to measure executive function in students in our Primary classrooms and we now have cumulative data since we started using the tool in 2016. Executive function refers to neurocognitive skills like working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility, which are higher level brain functions that develop over a person's lifespan. These skills have been shown to be vital for academic and socioemotional outcomes, and they can be improved through environmental experiences. We have been administering MEFS since 2016, and over 1000 Suzuki students have participated in screenings, with each student taking the assessment twice a year. Not surprisingly, our students skew above the national average, and the results have not declined during the pandemic.

COMMITMENT TO TEACHER TRAINING



We are excited that we have a large group of faculty currently attending Montessori training. This spring, six Suzuki Montessori teachers graduated from our Montessori Teacher Education Institute. Based on teachers who started training in January and February of this year, we are looking forward to welcoming 12 newly graduated Montessori teachers into our classrooms next summer. Our veteran teachers - and our newly trained Montessori teachers are the reason that we can continue to offer such a strong and authentic Montessori education for our students throughout the year.



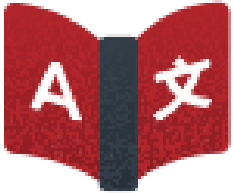
DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION



We have had a focused commitment to DLI since 2018. This commitment has really been challenged while operating during a pandemic since we sometimes had to prioritize health and safety over hiring DLI teachers in every classroom room. During the pandemic we were forced to scale back on the expansion of DLI, but despite this have managed to retain over 30 DLI faculty and staff across the three campuses. This summer we will be hiring additional DLI teachers prioritizing in classrooms where they are not present and as we can.



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING



Our top priorities this year were hiring and retention of quality faculty - which has been a complex and on-going challenge - as well as keeping our students and faculty healthy during the pandemic. Behind the scenes, we have also placed a high priority and investment in creating and then rolling out a comprehensive teacher (and staff) training program on both culturally responsive teaching and Anti-bias Education. We believe that a school cannot truly support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion without extensive and on-going training on these topics, as well as implementing an accountability system to ensure fidelity to the commitment. Earlier this year, Cathy Durand-Horne rejoined our Montessori Teacher Education Institute to lead our teacher training efforts around DEI. Since January, we have sent almost 50 faculty and/or staff through the 30-hour training course. We have big plans for the remainder of the year, and hope that we can get most of our faculty through this training before 2023.

- ✓ **Culturally Responsive Teaching** honors the uniqueness in every student and requires a teacher to examine their own "truths" and expectations about how children learn to modify their teaching style to reach each student. It requires that Montessori teachers not only base lessons on the observation of the student as they are trained to do in their Montessori training, but that they also understand how their observations are influenced by their own biases or preferences and therefore, may need to be modified for each child.
- ✓ **Anti-Bias Education** on the other hand is about teaching children how to acknowledge and celebrate differences in others. These children recognize differences, and our responsibility is to help them to articulate these differences in a humanizing and affirming manner. Dr. Shinichi Suzuki wrote about teaching children to have a "Noble Heart". Dr. Maria Montessori won a Nobel Peace Prize for her work in developing the Montessori Peace Education Curriculum. Anti-bias education fits perfectly within both of their work - and provides a framework for teachers to educate the students to be better global citizens.



A NOTE FROM CATHY DURAND-HORNE OUR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TRAINER



Culturally responsive teaching is not about racism, prejudice or making children feel bad about themselves. Rather, it is about teaching children how to acknowledge, honor and celebrate the differences that exist, without assigning values of greater than or less than. Culturally responsive teaching focuses on teaching children how to intentionally relate to others with the acknowledgement that we are all different. Sometimes those differences are seen and unseen, cultural and individual. Children are not blind to the differences, so we must teach them how to consider, honor and celebrate differences without assigning a value of greater than or less than because of those differences.

To do this, we must first examine ourselves so that we begin to normalize consideration, empathy, and respect for others as we relate as humans. Creating culturally responsive learning environments and modeling the behavior that we want to see is our obligation to the children. Research has shown that the development that occurs during the early years lays the foundation for the person that will become. **We have the dynamic opportunity and responsibility to affect change and plant seeds of positivity in young minds.**



-Cathy Durand-Horne, Director of Professional Development

Our DEI Vision and Values

1

Equity and Fairness

We actively work to dismantle disparate treatment and strive to create a sense of belonging in our community through affirming one another's identities and creating connections.

2

Value Diverse Community

We seek out diverse community members with a shared vision for our mission. We actively teach children to be supportive advocates and friends through empathy and perspective-taking.

3

Responsive and Competent

We maintain a deep obligation to teaching practices that are culturally competent, responsive and supportive, void of applying intent or making assumptions when situations emerge. We commit to maintaining an active posture in learning, understanding and accounting for cultural differences amongst our community members.

4

Growth Mindset

We cultivate a community committed to growth in all things and recognize this work as a journey, not a destination. We are committed to expanding our knowledge of others and place value on diverse thoughts and opinions while pushing through possible discomfort for the good of the community as a whole.



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COVID19 PROTOCOLS

Nurse Mgesha on Hold with the Health Department



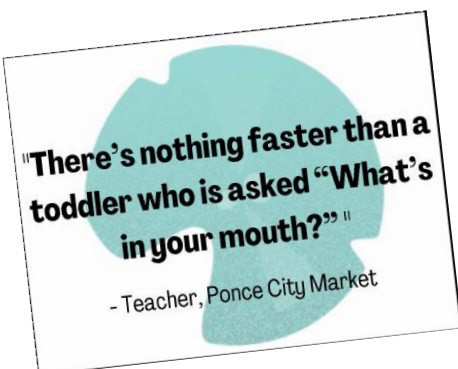
As we finish out the 2021-2022 school year, it is important to acknowledge that this has been another trying year for all in our community, and that despite this, our students have flourished. Our school made a commitment to take a conservative approach to COVID19, and to prioritize the health and safety of the children and faculty. We acknowledge that many families would have preferred more leniency with COVID protocols, and we thank them for supporting our decision to prioritize teacher retention by keeping them safe and honoring their needs. We also acknowledge that many other families would have preferred we maintain some of our COVID19 protocols (mask requirements in particular), but that they understood we needed to find a common, middle ground.

As we look to the next school year, we stay committed to our COVID19 policies and protocols - that is, following the CDC and Georgia Health Department guidance (which are sometimes at odds), and prioritizing teacher retention and the overall health and safety of the community. We do recognize that next year we will have to change our posture in our response to COVID19 and treat it in a similar fashion to other childhood contagious diseases. As we consider the timing of this, and how we will change our Health Policies to both incorporate COVID19 and what we learned during the pandemic, we will involve the community in this process.



May is Mental Health Awareness Month and it brings to light the impact COVID19 has had on the mental wellbeing of our community members. We are all "bone tired" with the pandemic. Thank you, teachers, and parents, working hard not to let your guard down and staying "calm and regulated" as we navigate this pandemic together. What COVID19 has taught me is that as a community we can shift our commitment to each other and make decisions that prioritize what is best for everyone - and not just ourselves. I am so proud and grateful that our faculty and parents have a shared commitment to each other during these trying times.

- Myesha Moore, Director of Health and Safety



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SUMMER AND 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR PRIORITIES


As we enter the summer session, we are re-imagining how we support parents and our parent development initiatives. This is a broad initiative, and it addresses how we onboard new families, how we communicate and reinforce our values, and how we make sure that we are giving the support to parents that they need as their children's needs shift developmentally. An important resource we provide at our school is Aileen Jackman, our Child Development Specialist. Not only does she provide support services for children who may be facing developmental or behavioral challenges, but she also provides on-going parent education. You will be hearing more in the months to come about how we are shifting some of her priorities to be more accessible to all families.

Each child is unique in personality, temperament and in their own individual characteristics. As children unfold themselves to us, we adapt, and just when we think we know them, they change again and as parents we need to change with them. As parents, when we evolve in our own understanding and development of ourselves, we enhance our relationship with our children, which in turn has a positive impact on their development.

- Aileen Jackman, Child Development Specialist



HOURS OF OPERATION/SCHOOL CLOSURES:

 This summer, we are expanding our hours to 5:30PM and this will go into effect on Tuesday, June 21 (day after Juneteenth Holiday). Once we can combine groups later this year, we plan to also move our opening hours to 7:30 AM. Please don't forget that last year we announced that we will recognize Juneteenth on Monday, June 20th and that this replaced Presidents Day Holiday.

FULL STEAM AHEAD:

When COVID19 started, we had to stop Limited Care/STEAM days because we did not want to risk spreading COVID19 between campuses. We had two major operational challenges with Limited Care in the past. First, it typically resulted in spikes in illnesses as germs were shared across campuses, and it also put a disproportionate burden on the staff that worked those days. In the spirit of transparency, we wanted to let you know that the faculty and administrative staff have asked that we not resume Limited Care because of these operational challenges, and thus it will not return in the future.

*"I love you so much Miss. Esha.
Guess what? I say this to
everyone I meet!"*

- Primary Student, Buckhead

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WHAT'S COMING - OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Later this year we will update our strategic plan. Part of this process is to source your input on the future of the school, and we look forward to your contribution (you will hear more about this later). It is hard to believe that it has been five years since we last updated it - be on the lookout later this year!

Thank you, teachers, and parents, for your commitment to the Suzuki School. We cannot achieve this without our values, which we strive daily to uphold. For those families who will be with us this summer and in the upcoming school year, we thank you for your belief in the school and in helping us live our values daily.

Sincerely,



Paula Charles
Paula Charles,
President



Courtney May
Courtney May,
Executive Director
PCM Campus Director



Kimberly Curtis
Kimberly Curtis,
Buckhead Director



Kelly Perryman
Kelly Perryman,
Northside Director



We are committed to the well-being of our **school community**.



We believe children are prepared for life through **holistic education**.



We seek and value **growth and learning** in service of excellence.



We value **emotional intelligence** and **honest consideration** of others' perspectives.

Suzuki Mission Statement

"To develop in young children a life-long love of learning by honoring each child's natural talent and ability in partnership with the parents"



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