

Elementary Guides

Our amazing teachers act as guides, supporting and challenging each individual child as they move through the Montessori Elementary Curriculum. Guides not only teach, they help students develop academically, socially and emotionally. Our teachers are native speakers of English or the target languages. They work in teams to deliver an amazing learning experience, in two languages!

**For the 2020-2021 school year, students may work with different teachers in smaller instructional groups so that the dual-language curriculum can be delivered in a safe socially distanced environment.*



Ms. Dana Inouye has been with Intercultural Montessori since 2011. Ms. Dana has a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Western Governors University and Graphic Design from Northern Illinois University. She is Montessori Certified for children ages 6 - 12 from through the Center for Guided Montessori Studies. Ms. Dana is also TEFL, and TEFL-C certified through the Teachers College, Columbia University. She has a passion for teaching and she is dedicated to nurturing each child's learning journey. Ms. Dana also has a love for travel and taught English in South Korea, China, and Taiwan. In her free time, she enjoys being in nature and photography.

Ms. Yolimar Barrientos Colon is originally from Puerto Rico. She graduated from Universidad Metropolitana in Bayamon with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary Education. Ms. Yolimar joined Intercultural Montessori as an Elementary Spanish teacher in 2018. Before coming to Intercultural, she worked as a teacher for 14 years; 11 years in a private school setting and three years in a public school. Ms. Yolimar is very passionate about her work because, through teaching, she can see each child's creativity blossom. She takes great pride in seeing the progress of her students and that every day, they are more engaged in a subject. Helping her students learn about themselves and the world is her continued motivation to work as a teacher.

Ms. Jamie Homan began teaching at Intercultural in 2014 and had six years of teaching experience before joining the school community. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Northeastern University in Chicago and is Montessori certificated, for students at both the Lower and Upper Elementary levels. Ms. Jamie has worked with both Spanish and Chinese lower elementary students at Intercultural. She is very passionate about educating children according to the Montessori principles. Ms. Jamie strives to create a nurturing environment where children can learn and experience challenges which help them to become citizens of the world. Ms. Jamie is an animal lover and also works at an animal hospital, where she adopted her two cats: Bonnie and Clyde.

Mr. Israel Vazquez (Mr. Izzy) is from Aurora, IL. He is new to Intercultural this year. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and History and is currently working on his Master's Degree in Secondary Education with a focus on Social Studies. Mr. Izzy is an experienced assistant teacher having worked both in the United States and in Spain. He is an assistant wrestling coach at East Aurora High School. Mr. Izzy's passion for education derives from wanting to help students grow academically and ultimately become excellent citizens of the world. During his free time, Mr. Izzy enjoys travel, learning about new cultures and spending time outdoors.

Mr. Wesley Schaff is from Wilmette, Illinois. He received a dual degree in Mathematics and Education from Marquette University. After college, Mr. Wesley moved to Chicago and taught for Chicago Public Schools for three years. He is currently in the process of completing his Montessori Certification for Lower and Upper Elementary. Mr. Wesley joined Intercultural's staff in 2016. As an elementary teacher, Mr. Wesley encourages independence and seeks to help students find what they are passionate about. "*Within the child lies the fate of the future.*" - Maria Montessori.

Ms. Katherine Ackerman (also known by her Chinese name Xiaomao) was born in Pennsylvania. She moved to China as a young child and grew up speaking both Chinese and English. She moved back to the United States from China in 2017. She has a Bachelor's of Science in Business Management and a Master's degree in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language from Shenyang Normal University. Ms. Xiaomao is in the process of obtaining her Montessori certification from the Center for Guided Montessori Studies.

Ms. Xiaomao joined the Intercultural team in 2017. Before coming to Intercultural, she had worked as a university language instructor and as the lead language teacher in a multilingual school for elementary aged children. Ms. Xiaomao believes that all children have the potential for greatness and she strives to empower them, as well as guide them to become caring and independent global citizens. In her free time, Xiaomao enjoys cooking and learning about different places and cultures.

Ms. Damaris Gonzalez is originally from Corozal, Puerto Rico and has been living in Chicago since 2017. Ms. Damaris received her B.A. in Elementary Education from the Universidad Central in Bayamán, Puerto Rico and is in the process of completing her Montessori Certification for students age 9-12. She has been a teacher since 2000, working in private and public schools as well as working in adult education in Puerto Rico. She joined Intercultural Montessori's Upper Elementary teaching team in 2017. Ms. Damaris is a passionate and nurturing teacher who believes that all students are capable of becoming expressive Spanish speakers. She believes in inspiring students by helping them explore their own interests and challenging them to expand their knowledge of different fields.

Mr. Xiaomin Fei is originally from Liaoning, China and has been living in the United States since 2017. Mr. Xiaomin received his Bachelor's in English Teaching and Master's Degree in translation from Shenyang Normal University in China. He is in the process of completing his Montessori certification for children 6-12 years through the Center for Guided Montessori Studies (CGMS). In China, Mr. Xiaomin taught elementary language for two years and worked as an English translator.

Mr. Xiaomin joined the Intercultural team in 2017. He is a passionate teacher who takes it upon himself to always give each student the attention they need. He prides himself in facing challenges with a positive attitude and hopes this will be an example for his students to follow.

Ms. Nicole Phillips grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and now lives in the city. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Indiana University. Before coming to Intercultural in 2019, Ms. Nicole worked at a Charter School in Chicago where she experienced working in an elementary multi-age classroom. Ms. Nicole is currently in the process of obtaining her Elementary II Montessori Certification through The Center For Guided Montessori Studies. She believes that in order to reach every learner, a teacher needs to provide instruction that celebrates each child's individuality. She also believes each student is a unique and important part of the classroom community. Ms. Nicole has a love for children and thinks that young minds bring joy and wonder to our world. In her free time, she enjoys drawing, cooking, and being outdoors.

Ms. Xiang Ji has been teaching at Intercultural for 9 years. From 2011 to 2014, she served as the lead teacher for the Long Feng Primary Community. From 2014 to 2016, she served as the lead teacher for HePing Lower Elementary Community. She has also been the school's Chinese Program Academic Coordinator since 2016. Ms. Xiang holds a Bachelor's degree in Education from Huangshan University and a Master's degree, with a major in Education Curriculum & Instruction and a minor in Early Childhood Education, from Southwestern College. She is also Montessori trained for Early Childhood and Elementary I-II. Ms. Xiang is a very dedicated, detail-oriented, and passionate teacher, who believes that every child is unique and requires individual care and attention in order to most effectively learn and develop. As such, she strongly believes in Montessori's method of 'following the child'.