



December 2020

Dear Grissom parents and families,

While the last year has been one of the most challenging that we have faced as a community, Principal Rowland and the Grissom team have remained laser-focused on the needs of Tulsa children and families. At the same time as navigating this unprecedented global pandemic, the Grissom team has been working to develop plans for an exciting and sustainable future for the school.

In the early months of 2020, we gathered feedback from thousands of Tulsans to help us understand our community's needs and priorities. We used this feedback to help shape our planning for investments that can grow neighborhood enrollment and provide broader district access to specialized programs.

The Grissom neighborhood is a wonderful place to live in Tulsa (I know because I spent a lot of time playing there as a child!), but sadly student enrollment at the school has been steadily declining. Based on our analysis of enrollment trends, we know that 30% of the families in the neighborhood are applying to other schools in our district that offer specialized programs. Families in the Grissom area clearly want the option of a more specialized educational experience for their students.

In January 2020, Grissom Elementary began an exploration of Montessori education as a possible programmatic shift that could build on their inclusive school culture and expectations for academic success, while creating a more specialized educational experience for students and families in the neighborhood. Montessori is a well-researched, proven program of learning that is hands-on and student-driven.

Principal Rowland and the Grissom team explored the Montessori curriculum, teacher training requirements, and any adjustments that would be needed in order for Grissom to launch a gradual shift to Montessori education. After months of exploration with teachers and staff, Principal Rowland shared with you his intention to recommend a shift to Montessori for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students in the 2021-2022 school year. I was so pleased to hear of the positive response to this change!

I am enthusiastic about the Montessori model and excited that Grissom neighborhood families will have this option available for their children. This shift will make Grissom Elementary only the second public Montessori program in our district **and** in our state as well as one of only a small number nation-wide. More frequently, the Montessori model has been restricted to private schools.

I am confident that Montessori education will serve your neighborhood children well, draw more neighborhood families into the school, and even attract families from other areas of our city. Yet, it will remain YOUR neighborhood school. This is a great opportunity for Grissom to grow a more robust and sustainable enrollment over time as the program grows each year.

I am so grateful to Principal Rowland and his team for their diligent exploration efforts over the last year and bold vision to move forward with Montessori in the 2021-2022 school year.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Gist', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Deborah A. Gist  
Superintendent