



## Community Guide

**Mission:**

We are a community of learners working together to provide a Montessori educational experience that engages and inspires students to become life-long learners and responsible participants in our diverse global community.

**Brickton**  
**MONTESSORI SCHOOL**  
Serving children 24 months through Middle School

8622 West Catalpa Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60656  
773.714.0646 • Brickton.org • Info@brickton.org

# Who's Who

## Brickton Montessori School Directors/Directresses

### Toddler Program (Ages 24 - 36 months)

Room 104: Melonie Arroyo, melonie.arroyo@brickton.org

### Children's House Program (Ages 3 - 6 years)

Room 101: Agnes Guerra, agnes.guerra@brickton.org

Room 103: Jen Cozad, jen.cozad@brickton.org

Room 107: Megan White, megan.white@brickton.org

### Lower Elementary Program (Ages 6 - 9 years)

Room 105 Co-directresses:

Heather Wilcek, heather.wilcek@brickton.org

Selena Brosnan, selena.brosnan@brickton.org

### Upper Elementary Program (Ages 9 - 12 years)

Rooms 100/102 Directress: Erica Lane, erica.lane@brickton.org

### Middle School Program (Ages 12 -15 years)

Room 106: Charles Martin, charles.martin@brickton.org

## Specialists

**Reading Specialist:** Liz Skrodzki, liz.skrodzki@brickton.org

**Music/Band/Choral Director:** Kathy Hummel, kathy.hummel@brickton.org

**Spanish Teacher:** Beth Peachey, beth.peachey@brickton.org

**Physical Education Instructor:** Tiffany Graham, tiffany.graham@brickton.org

## Brickton Montessori School Administration

**Head of School:** Cheryl LaCost, cheryl.lacost@brickton.org

**Director of Advancement:** Elizabeth Norman, beth.norman@brickton.org

**Education Coordinator:** Erica Lane, erica.lane@brickton.org

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Kelly McDermott, kelly.mcdermott@brickton.org

**Account Coordinator:** Dotty Schweitzer, dotty.schweitzer@brickton.org

**After School Coordinator:** Jackie Toro, jackie.toro@brickton.org

**School Secretary:** Sara Gregory, sara.gregory@brickton.org

# Board of Directors

## Brickton Montessori School's Board of Directors has three main roles:

- Fiduciary: Oversight and assessment of Brickton's mission and finances
- Strategic: Focus on a two to five year planning window
- Generative: Develop and share a vision for the future of Brickton Montessori

Brickton's head of school and administrative staff lead the day-to-day operations of the school. The board is not involved in decisions regarding student admission, curriculum development or faculty and staff hiring or evaluation.

## How is Brickton's board organized?

Brickton's board operates via a committee structure. There are currently seven committees: executive, nominating, operations, marketing, gifting, finance and community. The board also appoints ad hoc task forces, as needed, to address topics such as strategic planning and technology.

The full board meets at least five times during each school year. Typically, committees meet monthly. Their agenda is set by our strategic plan, direction from the Executive Committee, and emerging needs of the school. The committees make recommendations for consideration by the entire board. All policy decisions and major expenditures are discussed and voted on by the entire board. All meetings of the full board are open to any members of the community. Please check the family calendar and the Brickton Weekly for meeting dates and times if you would like to attend.

The board is always looking for dedicated parent volunteers to serve on board committees. Many of our current members were elected as directors after volunteering on these committees. Please contact David Anthony, Board President at bmsboardpresident@brickton.org if you are interested in serving. Typical board volunteer positions have a tenure of three years.

## Brickton Montessori School's Board

### Executive Committee

**President:** David Anthony, bmsboardpresident@brickton.org

**Vice President:** Cindy Degand

**Secretary:** Satyendra Sarmah

**Treasurer:** Dihan Fernando

**Head of School:** Cheryl LaCost

### Directors:

Suzanne Ergastolo, Jason Franzke, Heidi Natura, Joe Somers

## Parent Alliance (PA)

The purpose of the Parent Alliance (PA) is to bring families together to develop a sense of community among the parents, to promote volunteerism, to foster communication between the parents, faculty, and administration, and to sponsor special events to further build a sense of community within the school. All families are automatically members of the PA upon enrollment.

### Parent Alliance's Mission Statement:

- To serve as a liaison among parents in the spirit of volunteerism for our Montessori school, our children and our staff.
- To communicate to our parents efficiently and effectively about upcoming events and meetings.
- To actively foster a spirit of inclusion, cooperation and enthusiasm to promote and nurture the vibrant community within our Montessori school.

### When are PA meetings?

General PA meetings are held three to four times per year, typically at Brickton. All parents are invited and encouraged to attend. At these meetings, upcoming events are discussed, volunteer needs are assessed and announced, and committees report on progress. Please check the family calendar and the Brickton Weekly for PA meeting dates and times if you would like to attend. At each meeting care is provided for children and a light dinner is served.

### Parent Alliance Co-Chairpersons

Betty Boduch, bboduch@hotmail.com  
Susan Urbanski, susurbanski@gmail.com

## Volunteer Opportunities

Many opportunities exist at Brickton for families to volunteer. Upon enrollment, or re-enrollment families are invited to pledge five hours of their time towards volunteering during the Brickton school year. Many opportunities are available from helping in the classroom, to painting the school, to serving on a committee. Typically the 5 Hour Power Pledge is provided when the parent contract is delivered at a new family orientation or during re-enrollment.

### How can you volunteer at the classroom level?

Depending on the age of your child, classroom teachers often look to parents for help with laundry, providing snacks, reading to the children, assisting at classroom parties, chaperoning field trips, assisting with special projects, etc. Contact your director/directress if you'd like to volunteer.

### How about volunteering at Brickton's school-wide events?

Help is always needed to ensure that our many wonderful events run smoothly during the year. To join a committee or share a talent, please contact Kelly McDermott, our school volunteer coordinator, or come to a PA meeting where many committees are formed and events are planned. Often times, sign-up sheets will be posted on the school bulletin board prior to large events, asking parents to donate specific items for an event or volunteer their time and talent.

“ Volunteering for Brickton committees and events not only allowed me to support our school, but also gave me an opportunity to get to know other parents and make connections within our larger Montessori community. ”

Brickton Parent, 2014

# Fundraising

## What are the expectations and opportunities?

As a private school, tuition alone does not cover the cost of the extraordinary Montessori education our students receive; therefore, it is imperative that each Brickton family and staff member participates and contributes to our fundraising at whatever level they find comfortable. Many opportunities exist each year.

## Two major fundraising initiatives!

### The Annual Fund

This is our annual campaign for monetary donations with the goal of 100% participation from all families. All donations are appreciated.

### The Annual Benefit – “The Big Leap”

At this adult and alumni only event, we celebrate the extraordinary Brickton community. There are many ways to participate in this exciting fundraiser from raffles to an online auction and live auction. Our community puts on their party clothes and enjoys the casual night out, socializing and building community as we enjoy food, drinks, games and dancing!

Other fundraisers include a Brickton 5K Walk/Run, book fairs, Manna giftcards, etc.

## What effortless fundraisers are available for participation?

**Amazon smile** – visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and select Brickton as your charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases.

**Labels for Education** – Turn labels in at the office.

**Box Tops for Education** – Turn box tops in at the office.

**Ink Cartridge Recycling** - Turn used ink cartridges in the office.

**Target** – Register your Target card at [www.target.com](https://www.target.com), and Brickton will earn cash every time you shop.

**My Coke Rewards** – Become a member online and enter the codes from participating products.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How can I access the school website?

The school calendar, important forms, program information and the family directory can all be found on our school website. To access the family site, please go to [www.brickton.org](https://www.brickton.org). (**Username = family; Password = reflection**)

## What is an In-School Celebration?

In-School Celebrations are short assemblies/presentations held approximately once per month from 8:30 - 8:50 am in the Great Room. The entire school attends and participates (with the exception of Toddlers). Each month's celebration is hosted by a different Brickton classroom. All are welcome to attend. At the conclusion of the celebration, students return to their classrooms to continue their day.

## What is a Club Day?

Club Days are non-academic days when Brickton is open and offers care for students. Non-academic days include many holidays, spring break, parent conferences and record days. On these days, students participate in a variety of indoor and outdoor recreational activities. Full-day students are automatically enrolled for Club Days at no additional cost. All other students may register at a cost of \$50.00 per student for the day.

## How often is Brickton Montessori closed?

We try to balance the needs of our families and staff with what is best for our students. Brickton is closed on the following days\*:

- Labor Day
- Inservice Days (typically 3 per year for staff professional development)
- Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday)
- Winter Break
- American Montessori Society Conference (Friday only, and when in Chicago!)
- Memorial Day

*\*These dates are subject to change and can be checked on the school calendar.*

## What does it mean that Brickton is a nut-free school?

No peanuts, nuts or products containing nuts of any kind may be brought into the school in order to protect our students with severe food allergies. Many families have found that soy butter and sunflower seed butter are tasty alternatives to peanut butter.

For birthday treats, both Jewel and Walmart sell mini-cupcakes that are produced in a nut-free facility. In addition, fresh fruit, most brands of ice cream cups, Italian ice and Rice Krispy Treats are nut-free. Thank you for reading product labels!

# Community building events

## How can I expect to receive communications from the school?

Parent communication may come from a variety of sources including our website and private family portal, our digital newsletter, periodic school-wide email blasts, classroom blogs and parent communication folders located outside your child's classroom. Last but not least, like us on Facebook!

## What is the best way to contact my child's teacher?

All of our directors and directresses are available to communicate with parents outside of your child's instructional schedule. They are generally available for a quick comment at regularly scheduled drop-off times. All directors and directresses have email addresses for routine matters. For urgent needs, please call the office. Pre-arranged appointments are preferred for more specific and individualized needs.

## What is a pizza/hot dog day?

Approximately twice per month on Fridays, the Upper Elementary students coordinate special lunches for all students as a fundraiser to support their many field trips. Students who wish to receive this special lunch (pizza or beef hot dog) must be pre-registered and pre-paid. To sign-up or make modifications to your order, please visit or call the main office. The Toddler Program does not participate in these lunches.

## How can I contact another family for a playdate, birthday party, etc?

There is a link to the "Student Directory" within the private family portal of the website under the tab Private Access. This document contains each family's address, phone number and email address for those that have consented permission for the information to be shared.

## How will I know if school is canceled due to inclement weather?

First, please check our website at [www.brickton.org](http://www.brickton.org). The closing will be announced on the homepage and on our Facebook page. Brickton is listed on the Emergency School Closing website ([www.emergencyclosingcenter.com/ecc](http://www.emergencyclosingcenter.com/ecc)). In addition, you will receive an email from the school and your director/directress will make an attempt to contact you via phone.

## What is Operation Child Find?

Operation Child Find is a program offered through Chicago Public Schools (CPS) that provides free developmental screenings for children. It is offered to all Toddler and Children's House students on-site at Brickton once per year. Participation in the screenings is optional, but encouraged.

## What extracurricular activities does Brickton offer?

We offer three sessions (fall, winter, spring) of rotating after school extracurricular activities. Sessions have included dance, chess, sports, art, book clubs, etc. For more information, please contact Kelly McDermott.

## Back to School Block Party

The Back to School Block Party is the first Parent Alliance event of the year. Typically this is held on the 1st or 2nd Friday in September to welcome new and returning families back to school. Dinner and a number of games and activities are provided. This is a great opportunity to volunteer, with many ways to get involved.

## Picture Day

On Picture Day, your child will be photographed individually, with siblings and with his/her class by a professional photography service. These pictures will be used for the yearbook and the class photos posted in the hallway. You will also have an opportunity to purchase photos.

## Taste of Montessori

Every classroom hosts their own *Taste of Montessori* on a select evening in the fall. On this evening, families from your child's classroom gather together in the Great Room for a potluck dinner and socializing. Families then spend time working with their child in the classroom learning about his/her favorite activities.

## Halloween Parade and Trunk-or-Treat

For Halloween, students don their costumes, parade through the school and into the parking lot to "trick or treat" with Brickton family members who decorate their trunks/cars.

## Breakfast with Santa

This event is held off campus on the first Saturday of December. Families gather together for breakfast, a sing-a-long, arts and crafts, and a visit from Santa!

## Bowling Bash

Families are invited to participate in an afternoon of bowling and pizza. Typically this event is held on a Saturday afternoon in the winter months. It is another wonderful chance to socialize and build community.

## Friends of Brickton Day

This is one of our favorite days of the year! Students are invited to have a parent or special friend (grandparent, aunt or uncle, neighbor, etc) visit their school. The day begins with breakfast for the visitors in the Great Room, followed by time spent in the classroom working with their student host.

# Welcome to Brickton Montessori

## Art Expo

Each year, every Brickton student chooses a unique work of art that they created to display in the Great Room during Friends of Brickton Day. The Art Expo will be on display throughout the day so it can be viewed at your leisure.

## Fine Arts Night

At this Spring evening event, performances by our third year Children's House through Middle School students showcase their musical talents using their voices, Orff and band instruments.

## Staff Appreciation Day

This event is organized and hosted by parents as a way to give back and celebrate the Brickton staff. Parents donate breakfast items, as well as time, to serve a sit down breakfast. Sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board prior to the event.

## Parent Appreciation Breakfast

This homemade breakfast is our staff's way to celebrate YOU! We prepare a culinary delight for parents to stay and enjoy in the Great Room, or will package 'to go breakfasts' to be enjoyed at your home or office.

## Peace Picnic

Families bring a picnic dinner and meet at the nearby Catherine Chevalier Woods Pavilion to celebrate the school year. The Parent Alliance provides fun activities, such as bounce houses, organized games, etc.



This information packet is brought to you by Brickton's Parent Alliance.

For more information about Brickton Montessori School policies and procedures, please consult the Parent Handbook which can be found on the school website.