Middle School (12 - 14 years)

"For success in life depends in every case on self-confidence and the knowledge of one's own capacity and many-side powers of adaptation."

Dr. Maria Montessori

Overview of Middle School Program

Our goal is to provide an environment for adolescents that fosters self confidence, self knowledge, community identity, adaptability, academic competence and initiative, and a personal vision for the future. We believe that through such an environment adolescents can freely and honestly work to realize their potential as valued contributing members of society and work toward a peaceful and holistic world.

How it Works

A strong educational program acknowledges an adolescent's increasing responsibilities as an individual learner as well as part of a learning community. Within a Montessori program, we continue to broaden students' understanding of their impact as an individual and member of a group beyond their classroom to the local and global communities. Every person and element has a role in creating the solid educational program which prepares students for the challenges they will face in their future educational, work and life endeavors.

The adolescent is:

- An active, engaged, and self -directed learner
- A functional and contributing member of the class, school, city, and global community
- A functional and contributing member of the principal-teacher-student-parent team
- A responsible, independent individual, who honors commitments, possesses integrity, and is respectful

The teachers are:

- Facilitators for learning
- Consultants for students
- Creators of a developmentally appropriate and challenging environment that meets the social, emotional and cognitive needs of the students
- Communicators with parents and community
- Role models

The school structure offers:

- A learner centered environment
- A developmentally responsive curriculum
- A Montessori trained teacher with additional qualified adults as resources
- Parent-teacher-student partnerships
- Large blocks of uninterrupted learning time
- Peer and cross-age teaching and experiences
- Community partnerships to enhance and enrich learning

The school structure offers:

- A learner centered environment
- A developmentally responsive curriculum
- A Montessori trained teacher with additional qualified adults as resources
- Parent-teacher-student partnerships
- Large blocks of uninterrupted learning time
- Peer and cross-age teaching and experiences
- Community partnerships to enhance and enrich learning

The curriculum and instruction includes:

- Trans-disciplinary themes
- Learning how to learn strategies
- Personalized learning plans
- Mastery learning, coaching and exploratory activities
- Long-term independent and cooperative learning projects
- Community building and social interaction with peers
- Meaningful and challenging work
- Activities for self-expression, self-knowledge, self-reflection, and self-assessment
- A pedagogical approach that values all nine intelligences and a variety of learning styles
- Activities that foster interdependence
- Activities that support learning economic independence
- School and community service projects
- Off-site activities integrated with curriculum goals

Middle School Curriculum

The curriculum is structured as a two-year program in which students receive courses in language, literature, writing, speech, Spanish, math, science, social studies, health, physical education, outdoor education, service learning, and fine arts. Literature, social studies, and science courses are structured on a theme with related writing assignments in support of strengthening understanding of material and communicating ideas. As students collectively study courses together, some receive Year A or B, for example, as seventh year, others as eighth year. Expectations of performance are appropriately greater for eighth year students.

Language – The language curriculum follows the reading and writing workshop model established by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project of Columbia. It encompasses an integrated study of vocabulary, literature, grammar and mechanics, and writing.

Speech – Students learn a variety of communication skills, such as acknowledging others, using "I" messages, active listening, goal setting and group decision-making. Through the process of Council, students strengthen skills in speaking from the heart, speaking spontaneously, being of lean expression, and listening devoutly. Students also participate in activities developed from Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens; Costa and Kalick's Sixteen Habits of Mind, and The Heroic Journey.

Social Studies – This coursework includes both geography and history through the study of the themes of locations, place movements, regions, and interactions/progress of people and their environment through the following topics: Connections (Native Americans), Exploration and Perspectives (New World, Other Continents, Space and the Deep Sea), Identity (Immigration), Systems (Economics and Economic Systems), Interdependence (Ecology and Future Visions), Structures (Governments and US Government), Forces (Revolutions), Power (Human RIghts Movement), Changes (Industrial Revolution) and Balance (Peace Education and Future Vision).

Mathematics – This course covers use a pre-algebra and algebra curriculum designed by Stephanie Romero that utilizes the Montessori materials to introduce concepts before practicing them abstractly. The students will have two guiding questions per cycle. Students must take quizzes for feedback and master comprehensive tests. Each year's curriculum contains units of Pre-Algebra and Algebra, including quadratic equations, coordinate graphs, mathematical chemistry, geometry, radicals and the Pythagorean theorem.

Physical Science – The physical science curriculum covers the study of Forces (Motion and Four Fundamental Forces); Structures (The Structure and Nature of Matter); Power (Power, Energy, and Waves); Changes (Work and Machines); and Balance (Chemistry and Future Technology).

Life Science – The life science curriculum covers the study of Connections (Cells and Living Things), Exploration (Virus, Monera, Protista, and Fungi), Identity (Genetics), Systems (Animal Systems), and Interdependence (Ecosystems and Future Visions).

Physical Education and Health – The Physical Education program focuses on individual conditioning, sports skills and team building with yoga sessions once per week and PE classes twice per week. As part of the Health program, students explore issues of belonging, friendships, adolescent development,stress management, self-esteem, peer pressure, drug education, sexuality, nutrition, and balanced living.

Spanish – Students learn to listen and understand, speak, read, and write Spanish, using a textbook, a workbook, and engaging in a wide variety of activities to foster these skills while learning about the spanish culture.

Computer Literacy – Computer activities are integrated into all subject areas, with word processing, spreadsheets, graphics, academic programs and simulation games covered in the process of work.

Outdoor and Career Education and Service Learning – Through overnight outdoor education immersion trips, students develop an appreciation for ecological issues and learn how to work on and with the land. In economics, students run a class business, which they decide upon at the beginning of the year. For the business, the students keep an inventory of materials, buy supplies, produce and sell the product or service, and keep track of income and expenses. The funds generated from the business may be applied to Middle School trips. As part of service learning students engage in community service experiences within the school as well as assisting and forming partnerships with community service organizations such as The Alliance for the Great Lakes and environmental preservation and animal husbandry activities at Nature's Classroom.

Fine Arts/Electives – Students participate in a music class on a weekly basis and art is integrated thematically into each cycle of work. Areas of elective exploration vary each year with student interest and availability of outside teaching resources. Courses may include the following: photography, painting, video-making, sculpture, pottery, drama, carpentry, jewelry, philosophy and culinary arts.