



**MIDDLE SCHOOL/ADOLESCENT
CURRICULUM GUIDE**

Middle School Mission Statement

The mission of our Montessori Middle School is to educate the minds and the hearts of its students in a challenging, vibrant community that prizes academic excellence.

Founded in 2016, the Montessori Middle School Program serves 7th grade students (expanding to include 8th grade in 2017) using a curriculum designed to motivate learners of varied backgrounds, interests, and talents. What they share is a demanding academic environment in which their teachers inspires them to love learning and to embrace curiosity, creativity, and hard work. Providing structure and a strong foundation allowing for increasing independence as students move through their two years. A low teacher to student ratio permits teachers to find their students' strengths and insist on their best efforts. Our commitment to the success of every student is absolute.

At the same time, we believe that success comes in many forms. Through the arts, athletics, ample leadership opportunities, extracurricular activities, and community service, Montessori students are encouraged to discover and to demonstrate that the mind and heart are equally important, and that one is empty without the other.

Diversity Statement

The Montessori Middle School is committed to diversity in an educational environment of responsibility, mutual respect, and empathy. We value individuals whose differences include, but are not limited to, age, ethnicity, family structure, gender, learning style, physical ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Fulfilling this mission is an ongoing process requiring active participation and frequent dialogue.

All members of our community are expected to keep their minds and hearts open to difference as a source of strength and a means of growth.

Goals for Students

In order to become intellectually curious and self-reliant, Middle School students must develop a strong academic foundation and critical thinking skills. The academic program is a classical liberal arts curriculum, adapted to the modern world, which emphasizes in-depth study within the daily context of Montessori tenets and values.

As part of the Middle School community, a student is expected to:

1. Take responsibility for their own work.
2. Adjust to different teachers' styles and expectations.
3. Face challenges and learn to overcome obstacles that come with building a strong academic foundation.
4. Discover who they are and learn to cultivate their strengths and talents.
5. Respect all members of the community: students, faculty, and staff.
6. Participate actively in the wider community life of the school.

Goals for Parents

The school expects to work in partnership with parents in support of the education of their child/ren and s/he becomes increasingly confident and independent.

This partnership is achieved when parents:

1. Trust the Montessori educational philosophy and support the faculty as they set standards for both the intellectual development and the personal behavior of each student.
2. Establish schoolwork as a priority at home and provide time and space for study.
3. Stay well informed about the school program and their child's progress by reading the community newsletter and attending parent education nights, teacher conferences, and other parent and community events.
4. Communicate with the school through your child's advisor (yet to be assigned), whose role is to oversee each student's educational development.
5. Respect the school schedule by assuring your child's prompt and regular attendance.

7th Grade Core Curriculum

All courses begin with a review of problem-solving strategies and applications. Pre-tests are given to determine the skill level of each student. Students are placed at their level. Frequent assessments in the form of scheduled chapter tests, weekly quizzes, and vocabulary tests are part of each course.

Service Learning

All students are immersed in several service learning activities and opportunities throughout the academic year. The Montessori Middle School firmly believes that service toward human communities and the environment helps cultivate the developing adolescent. Our partnership with several local organizations allows our

students to practice building self-esteem, character, teamwork, respect, compassion, and kindness. Students examine how socioeconomic status, race, age, and circumstance might affect specific communities and their opportunities. Students are encouraged to introduce new service projects and endeavors to our school community and are supported through the process of translating an idea into a reality.

Business Committee

The mission of the Business Committee is to encourage students to become comfortable with, interested in, and excited about economics and finance so that they can function knowledgeably in their personal lives, professionally and as responsible citizens.

Business Committee allows students to learn basic economic concepts through planning and operating a Middle School business. One of the major responsibilities of the committee is organizing and hosting a yearly event.

Throughout the school year the committee will engage in various endeavors including sales, fundraising and charitable giving. Students are always welcome to initiate new businesses and projects. We encourage student participation in the planning and operation of the life of the school community.

Internship Week

Each 7th-grade student, with the help of his/her teaching team, will select a place of business to work at for one week. By going out to a place of work students are able to experience, firsthand, what adult work is like. This moves career development beyond the traditional career day. It expects the student to abide by the rules that govern that place of business, while also giving each intern the opportunity to shadow an expert. The goal of internship week is to allow students to explore work they find interesting. This interest just may spark the desire to pursue a career in that field of study.

Electives

Each six weeks students will have the opportunity to experience a new elective. Electives include keyboarding, intensive writing, visual arts, music, and Spanish. (Keyboarding and intensive writing will be taught by the middle school teaching

team.) Visual arts, music, and Spanish will be taught by our specialty teachers. PE will take place each morning in order to get students awake and ready for their day.

Social Studies

The social studies curriculum takes a cultural studies approach considering history, geography, economics, and current events. The program seeks to take students beyond memorizing to a level of comprehension, coherence and critical thinking. A wide variety of resources are used in addition to the text. Guest speakers, simulations, field studies and debates allow social studies to become an inspirational and immersive experience. Lectures morph into classroom discussions generally incorporating the Socratic method in order to bring forth diverse perspectives and interpretations. Students must harness the power of effective communication through both oral and written projects and presentations.

Content is taught thematically rather than strictly chronologically. General topics covered include:

- Revolutions (French, American, Industrial, Russian)
- World Wars
- Oppression and Reform
- The Civil War
- The Great Depression
- Immigration
- The Cold War and American Government

This immersive, interdisciplinary approach to history creates an appreciation for the past, a respect for social systems and a sense of civic responsibility, with an ultimate goal of fostering and encouraging a lifelong interest in the society and world in which we live.

Language Arts

Students glean meaning, create and support a strong thesis in critical, expository, and persuasive essays, and compose expressive writing that shows evidence of knowledge of the structures and conventions of written standard English. Students begin the year reading a variety of texts focusing on author's intent and character studies. The year concludes with in-class reading of William Shakespeare. In a seminar-type setting, we explore reading responses, question character motivation, and develop discussion skills. Students will practice forming a focused thesis, then researching in both their books and their own lives for supporting examples.

Students improve their vocabulary, grammar, and writing mechanics through targeted lessons and essay revisions.

Mathematics

Algebra Readiness

In this course, students continue to develop algebraic thinking skills by deepening their understanding of concepts and vocabulary. Areas of study include operations with whole numbers, integers, inequalities, number theory, metric and customary measurement conversion, fractions, percents, proportions, ratios, probability, concepts in plane and solid geometry, functions, linear functions, and an introduction to the scientific calculator. Students make real work applications within the realm of math and how it affects and shapes daily actions, thought, and decision making. Students are expected to utilize the step-by-step examples provided in their text and maintain an organized section of notes for nightly review. This course is geared towards the South Carolina state standards and national educational organizations.

Pre-Algebra Course

The pre-algebra course is designed to develop a strong foundation in algebra, geometry, trigonometry and problem solving. Students need to understand these pre-algebraic prerequisites, concepts and skills to be successful in more advanced courses. The student learns to read the text to find key concepts, to take notes, and to build a math vocabulary. Practice with test taking and varied question formats are given to build the confidence and problem solving skills needed to achieve success. Use of scientific calculators and the publisher's web pages are incorporated into classroom study.

Algebra

As a high school math course, students are presented with a broad range of topics focusing on the development of algebraic concepts and the acquisition of skills. Various algorithms are carried out using a collection of mathematical properties and relationships. Students then apply these properties and thus are able to visualize and verbalize the underlying mathematical concepts while building a strong mathematical vocabulary. Technology is integrated through the use of scientific calculators, graphing calculators, and computers.

Science

Life Sciences

For the 7th grade year the focus is on Life Science. Distinct units focus upon:

- Classification and Conservation of Matter
- Organization in Living Systems
- Inheritance and Variation of Traits (Heredity)
- Interactions of Living Systems and the Environment (Ecology)

The course finishes with the discovery of the diversity of structure and function in plants and animals in comparison to similar systems in the human body.

This course provides students with the analytical tools necessary to move from practical and specific to more abstract constructions of the surrounding world. The approach is science education through inquiry related and overlapping with other areas of study including history, mathematics, and technology. The student will use the science and engineering practices, including the processes and skills of scientific inquiry, to develop understandings of science content.

Students will experience field studies and they will regularly experience hands-on science through experimentation and lab work in order to develop the habits of mind that are necessary for scientific thinking, and allow students to engage in science in ways that are similar to those used by scientists and engineers. Each week the field studies and experiments will be supported through lectures and class discussions led by the teacher. Students are required to maintain a learning journal in which they critically analyze a studied theme through various forms of writing and artwork. Students will show mastery through various mediums including their journals, quizzes, chapter tests, and projects.

Grading (10-Point Scale)

Throughout and at the end of each 6-week cycle students will be assessed using a variety of strategies, including quizzes, tests, presentations, and group/self-assessments. The following grading scale will be used to grade formal assessments.

- A: (90 – 100)
- B: (80 – 90)
- C: (70 – 80)
- D: (60 – 70)
- F: (50 - 60)
- I: Incomplete Work

Mastery Level

Students are given advanced notice of when tests will be given and it is expected each will prepare adequately. Students are expected to achieve a mastery level of 80% on tests in all subject areas. If a student does not, he or she will work with the teacher to achieve mastery. This may be achieved by retesting, doing extra work related to the area the student needs to improve, correcting the test, or doing some other activity decided by the teacher. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the need to retest or meeting the teacher, students may be required to forfeit their entire recess on the day of the retest or student/teacher meeting. Mastery level spelling is required on all work to receive full credit. Students should use a dictionary to check spelling.

Late Work Policy

At the Middle School level students are learning to manage their time, prioritize, and to take responsibility for their actions. We understand that they are still learning to do this; however, we realize that being able to meet deadlines is important, not only in school but in the outside world.

To be successful students must stay current with their work. Students who turn in late work will not receive credit.

Students will be given a limited number of “get out of late work free” passes per year. The number and how these passes will be used is currently being developed by the middle school teaching team.

Guidance

Guidance services are available to assist students in overcoming problems which can impede learning and to provide complete information and guidance in making effective educational, occupational and life plans which hold promise for personal fulfillment as mature and responsible men and women.

Parents may call the guidance office to discuss problems or to arrange appointments.

Students are urged to contact the guidance counselor when they feel they are experiencing difficulty in a class, need help in planning or adjusting, would like to

discuss vocational interests, need an interpretation of various test scores, need to discuss personal problems, or want information about future educational opportunities.

Textbooks

Each Middle School teacher chose a, or a few South Carolina approved textbooks to use as resources throughout the school year. At times, students may be asked to take this textbook home to study. Please note that any missing textbooks at the end of the year will result in a significant fine. We will take every precaution to ensure that the books are well labeled, so that each is returned to us.

Homework

Homework is a practical life experience that helps to prepare the students for the expectations in high school, college, and eventually the work place. It is a necessary component of Middle School, yet should not be assigned in such abundance that it interferes with extra curricular activities, including spending time with family. Your adolescent can expect to spend 1 – 1.5 hours per night on homework. Of course this depends on the their efficiency and time management, thus students may end up spending less time out of the classroom on homework.

If a student is struggling with homework, the content or amount, please have the student let his or her teacher know immediately. We want to help him or her be successful. Also, having a student ask for help directly is part of the maturation process. We want to keep communication lines open with parents, but we want to give the students a chance to develop the needed communication skills to be successful in high school and college.